

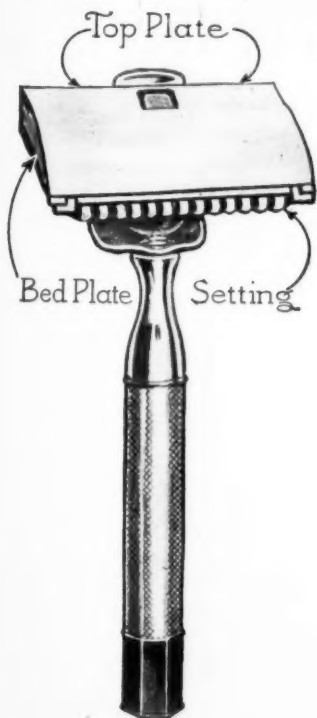
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AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

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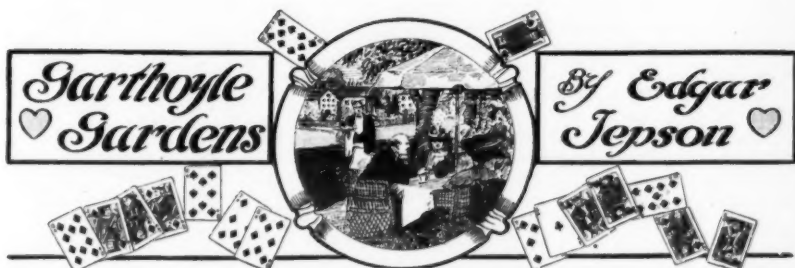
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXII.

DECEMBER, 1913.

No. 5.



CHAPTER I.



AM Garthoyle; but the Gardens were not called after me. My uncle, Algernon Garthoyle, built them, a triangle of twenty-one houses in the heart of Mayfair, and called them after himself. When, after the poor old chap's funeral, his will was read, and I found that he had left them to me, I was indeed surprised. I had always taken it for granted that he would leave them to that strenuous politician, my cousin, Herbert Polkington. So had Herbert; and he did look disgusted. I should have thought myself deucedly lucky if my uncle had left me half of the hundred thousand pounds that he had invested outside the Gardens; the Gardens themselves, twenty-five thousand a year, sounded too good to be true.

But there is always a fly in the ointment, and the clause in the will in which the Gardens were left to me ended with the condition that I should manage them myself.

Well, there was no help for it. I must buckle to. The first thing to do was to get help. As I motored down to the Temple and climbed the stairs to

Jack Thurman's rooms in the King's Bench Walk, Garthoyle Gardens, all the twenty-one houses, weighed heavily on my mind.

Jack himself opened his door to me. I greeted him gloomily, and we went into his sitting room.

"Jack," I said sadly, "within the last two hours I've become one of the workers of the world."

"Never!" cried Jack. "Well, I *am* glad to hear it! I've always been worrying you to stop leading your idle, rackets life, and use those brains of yours."

"And you call yourself my friend!" I said reproachfully.

"Well, you have brains, you know; all vertebrates have brains. What's happened?"

"I've become the owner of Garthoyle Gardens."

"Well, but—but that only means you've thirty thousand a year to spend on racketing about instead of five," said Jack, with a perplexed air.

"No; it means that I shall have no time to racket about. You didn't know my Uncle Algernon. Garthoyle Gardens were his passion; they were almost his monomania. I dined with him once every month—a family dinner, don't

you know?—just he and I. And I give you my word he bored me to death with his talk about those Gardens. I didn't let him see it, of course, for I was fond of the old chap. He knew everything about the Gardens—the history of every tenant in every house; how he made his money, if he hadn't inherited it; how many sons and daughters he had; how many servants—male and female—he kept; how many horses, carriages, and motor cars."

"He must have had a capacious brain," said Jack.

"Oh, he kept a record of all these things in a big book, like a ledger. He even entered in it all the births, deaths, and marriages that took place in the Gardens. At one time, when I dined with him, I used to ask him how many babies had been vaccinated in the Gardens during the month. But I gave that up. It set him talking about the Gardens at once, and I was the sooner bored. Those Gardens were the apple of his eye—yes, the apple of his eye."

"Then I wonder that he left them to you," said Jack frankly.

"So did I. He was always down on me—worse than you—for my idle life. He wanted me to take my duties as a hereditary legislator more seriously, take lessons in elocution, engage a political expert as my secretary, and deliver such speeches as he composed for me to the House of Lords. He was always grumbling at my idleness. I should have thought myself deucedly lucky if he'd left me fifty thousand pounds. And now I've got the Gardens! But—Garthoyle Gardens are a gilded pill."

"I should like to have the swallowing of it," said Jack, and he smacked his lips. "But what do you mean?"

"I mean that Garthoyle Gardens mean the strenuous life. They are left to me on the condition that I am my own house agent, that I run them myself. I've got to interview proposed tenants, examine their standing, their references, and their leases; I've got to see to all matters connected with the upkeep of the Gardens, estimates, and contracts for repairs. I've got to run those Gar-

dens ever so much more than my uncle did himself."

"Good! Excellent!" cried Jack.

"And I thought you were my friend," I said again reproachfully.

"Do you all the good in the world," grinned Jack. "And if you fail to fulfill the condition you lose the property?"

"No; that's where my uncle had me. There's no such provision. If I accept the bequest, it's left entirely to my honor to fulfill the condition. Of course, I accept it. No one refuses twenty-five thousand a year."

"Hardly," said Jack.

"Besides, I want money. It's been the deuce of a job to keep up the title on five thousand a year; and I hate having to let Garth Royal to that Hamburg money lender."

"Yes; that certainly is a nuisance," said Jack.

"But taking the Gardens on these terms means chaining a log—a gold log—round my neck for the rest of my life. I can't go off to the States for six months, as I did last year. I can't go shooting in Uganda again—not for long enough to be worth while. You see, my uncle has shown such utter confidence in me that I can't go back on him. Hard labor is what it means for me."

"You'll soon get used to work," consoled Jack.

I shook my head.

"I'm very doubtful about that. Mine is an untrammelled spirit. And there is also a terrible danger attached to the bequest. My uncle's last words in the document containing these conditions were that he was sure I should grow as fond of the Gardens as he was himself. That would be awful. I might grow to talk of nothing else, choke off my friends one by one by boring them about the Gardens, and bring myself to an old age of lonely desolation. Think of it."

"I can't," said Jack.

"Well, you see how things are. I'm one of the workers of the world—in for the strenuous life of the house agent. Now, what I want is a right-hand man. I want you. I'll give you a thousand a

year, and you'll give me all the time you can spare from the Bar."

Jack's eyes opened wide, and they shone. He had done brilliant things at Oxford; but that period had come to an end, and he was now in the briefless stage of his barrister's career and hard up. Then his face fell, and he shook his head.

"My good Garth, it's very nice of you to make this offer, but it's absurd. You can get a clerk for a hundred and fifty a year who will give you all his time and do everything for you."

"You're wrong," I said. "A clerk can't do what I want. I want some one to teach me the work—to explain everything to me from the beginning patiently. And, above all, I want some one to keep me up to my work. That's the important thing. No clerk would do that. He'd always be saving me the trouble. You're the only man who can really help me to carry out my uncle's wishes, and I must have you. It's settled. There's nothing more to be said about it."

Jack seemed to think that there was more to be said about it, and he said it for nearly an hour. But since I was doomed to the strenuous life, I thought I might as well begin; and I was strenuous with him. In fact, I wore him down to a compromise. He agreed to become my right-hand man on a salary of five hundred a year; and I was very glad to get him.

The next day I fully realized that I had burned my boats—for the first time in my life I had an occupation. I settled down to prepare for it gloomily. I moved from Mount Street to my uncle's house in Garthoyle Gardens, Number Eighteen.

As I have said, the Gardens are a triangle of twenty-one houses, seven houses on either side, and seven at the base. They look out on a triangular garden in the middle, of which all the occupants of the houses have the use. Number Eighteen is in the center of the base of the triangle; and it affords a good view of the whole of it.

My uncle had made the library, on the first floor, his watch tower; and I

am sorry to say that he had carried his vigilance to the point of having two pairs of extremely powerful field glasses on a little table beside the window at which he used to sit. I say that I am sorry, because when I picked up the largest pair and turned them on to Number Three, I not only got a perfect view of the Luddingtons at lunch, but also I got a perfect view of their being acrimonious with one another. It is hardly fair that one should know so much about one's tenants.

It was quite plain to me that to be a real house agent I must have an office; and it was also quite plain that it must be in the house, so that I could always step into it without having to make a tiresome journey. I decided that I would not use the library, as my uncle had done, but that I would fit up a pleasant room on the ground floor, looking out on the garden at the back of the house, as a complete office, with desks and pigeonholes and a safe.

I did not bother Jack about this; I was paying him for legal help. I motored up to Oxford Street and along it till I found a likely-looking shop, and there I ordered everything that seemed right. When the room had been fitted up, I had all the books and documents connected with the Gardens moved into it from the offices of Messrs. Siddle & Wodgett, who had acted as my uncle's house agents.

When they had all been brought in and put tidily away, and at last I stood in my own complete office, I had a proud sense of being truly one of the workers of the world. Then it occurred to me that I needed some one to work the typewriter; I could not do it myself—not properly. I tried.

Jack told me that the best way to get some one was to advertise; and I advertised for a lady typist, stenographer, and bookkeeper, as he suggested. But he was not at hand when I wrote out that advertisement, and we had not discussed the question of salary. Therefore, I offered three guineas a week, which seemed to me fair to begin with. I got my first experience of what a hard life a house agent's is.

I invited applicants for the post to call at ten. At nine, when I got up, I heard a good deal of noise out in the Gardens, and I observed that Mowart, my man, was pale and scared.

Mowart is not allowed to speak to me before breakfast, but I saw that he was dying to speak, and I said:

"What's the matter with you, Mowart? Has there been an earthquake in the night?"

"No, your lordship. But there's some young persons waiting to see your lordship," said Mowart.

"That's all right. I advertised for them," I said.

"There's a good many young persons, your lordship," said Mowart, in a shaky voice.

I went to the window, and my eyes and mouth opened wide as I gazed down on a surging, seething sea of wide-spreading hats. Among them rose scores of policemen's helmets, and a column of police was marching into the triangle through its apex. For a moment I thought that I had assembled around my door half England's womanhood, and all the metropolitan police.

"Ain't it awful, your lordship?" said Mowart, over my shoulder.

And I could scarcely hear him for the volume of shrill sound that rose from that female sea.

His voice recalled me to myself. I remembered that in great emergencies England looks to her peers; and with an effort I got my mouth shut.

"I shall have a wide choice," I said calmly; and I went to my bath. I did not trust my chin to Mowart's hands that morning; they were too shaky.

"I suppose I must interview them—after breakfast," I said calmly.

"All them thousands?" quavered Mowart.

"If I have to do it to get what I want," I replied firmly. And I went in to breakfast.

At breakfast, Richards, my uncle's old butler, was in such an emotional condition, clattering dishes and dropping plates, that I had to pause to assure him—in a shout, for the volume of

shrill chattering was deafening—that women did not bite—often.

After breakfast, I began to interview the applicants. Ten policemen admitted them, one at a time, through the front door. I sat down at my desk in the office, and asked them questions and wrote down their answers and qualifications in a most businesslike way. At the end of the interview, each one was let out by the back door.

Of the first hundred applicants, forty-three were actual typists, the other fifty-seven, as far as I could make out, had come just for the pleasure of a little conversation with a peer. Some of them took it blushing, others did not. I was much touched by their devotion to the Upper House, but they rather wasted my time, and you cannot be strenuous and have your time wasted, too. I grew rather short with that kind before the end of the morning.

The hundred and eleventh girl, Miss Delicia Wishart, was the girl I wanted. She was fully qualified; she spoke and looked as if she were capable; and she was undoubtedly attractive, with a soft, pleasant voice. I thought that I should work better with an attractive assistant. I engaged her.

CHAPTER II.

Jack and Miss Wishart came to the office at nine. I came at ten. This had to be because I kept later hours than they did. They had spent the hour planning an honest day's work for me. They had not stinted me. It began with answering letters—forty-nine of them, fifteen from tenants. It seemed that whenever a tenant had five minutes to spare he, or she, sat down and dashed off an unpleasant letter to the house agent. Also, they were always "at a loss to understand" something. Sir Marmaduke Ponderbury was "at a loss to understand" why in a well-appointed house there were only three gas brackets in the wine cellars; Lady Pedders was "at a loss to understand" why in a well-appointed house there was no gate to the stairs at the third landing to prevent her children falling down them;

Sir Hector Kilsluthery was "at a loss to understand" why a well-appointed house was not fitted with double windows from top to bottom, back and front.

I was soon grinding my teeth; then I perceived that, if they were "at a loss to understand," I had better be "unable to see my way." I replied that I could not see my way to making these structural alterations—a good filling phrase of Miss Wishart's, that—but I gave them permission to make them themselves.

On Jack's suggestion, I signed all the letters "Garth & Thurman." He said that it would be safer; that if I did not, I might have my tenants bothering me about things out of business hours, whenever they chanced to meet me. I was quite sure that they would, and I jumped at his suggestion. Now, when they tackled me, I could always refer them to Garth & Thurman. It turned out very useful.

The letters done, I wrestled with leases, assessments, and repairing contracts, trying to get the hang of things. Jack assured me that my uncle had paid too much for everything; that I should need fresh contracts, and probably fresh contractors; and it would mean studying dozens of price lists to check them. It was cheerful news.

Then he said: "I've come across one curious thing—Number Nine pays no rent."

"The deuce it doesn't!" said I. "Well, I suppose it wouldn't. My uncle always told me that it was an unlucky house. It has been on fire; the water pipes burst every winter; the roof will suddenly leak without just cause; and poor little Mrs. Bulkeley committed suicide there by jumping out of a second-floor window. I'm not really surprised that it doesn't pay rent."

"Yes; here's a letter from the tenant, J. Quintus Scruton, to Siddle & Wodgett, saying that he has arranged with your uncle to have the house rent free; and your uncle has indorsed the letter."

"I must look into this," I said, and I reached for my uncle's record, which I

had handy on my desk, and turned up Number Nine.

It had, indeed, a black record—eleven tenants in fifteen years.

The last entries ran:

Tenant: J. Quintus Scruton. Gum millionaire from New Zealand. Age about forty-seven. Widower. No family. Theosophist.

Servants: Butler, chef, two footmen, housekeeper, and eight other females.

Vehicles: Nine.

Lease: Seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, at two thousand pounds a year.

February 30: Painful discovery—the house is haunted.

That was all; no dossier of the ghost, no reason why the gum millionaire paid no rent. We discussed the matter, and came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to write to him demanding prompt payment of the last quarter's rent. Then he would inform us of the reason.

Miss Wishart wrote the letter, and when I had signed it, I struck work for the day. I had a strong feeling at the moment that mine was a delicately poised brain, and that it needed to be accustomed to the strain of work quietly and by slow degrees. I told Jack and Miss Wishart this. Miss Wishart smiled; but Jack said, in a grumbling tone:

"I wanted you to put in a little work at some price lists of house fittings. You ought to go carefully into the matter of house fittings."

"I will to-morrow," I said. "And I see that the sooner I acquire a defensive habit of procrastination, the safer I shall be."

With that I left them.

The next morning, after I had answered thirty-nine letters, I did betake myself to the study of the prices of house fittings; and it was a tedious job. Jack suggested that I should get a more profound understanding of house fittings if I went myself and bought those that I had not been able to refuse my correspondents, and so came to know the house fitting in its lair. After lunch, having answered eleven more letters—four from tenants, which came by the two-o'clock post—I went. After three

hours among the house fittings, I came home, a broken man. It seemed to me that house fittings were the study of a lifetime, and that I ought to have begun it the moment I went to Eton.

Richards met me with the information that Mr. J. Quintus Scruton had called to see me on business, and was awaiting me in the library. I was feeling very strongly that I had been house agent enough for one day; but business was business, and I had to see him. As I went up the stairs, it occurred to me that the affair seemed queer; that J. Quintus Scruton might be out after the gullible peer. It seemed a pity that he should not find one. I stuck my eyeglass in my eye, opened my mouth, and went into the library, looking as gullible a young peer as any one could wish to see. I had found the look useful before.

Mr. J. Quintus Scruton rose as I entered. He was a tall, thin, active-looking man, torpedo-bearded, with a deeply lined, brown face, out of which stuck a big, hooked nose. He looked as if he had spent most of his life out of doors in very bad weather. I took rather a dislike to him at the very first sight. The checks of the trousers that he was wearing with his gray morning coat were quite impossible.

"How do you do?" I drawled.

"How do you do, Lord Garthoyle? I am pleased to make the acquaintance of my new landlord," he said, in a rough, hoarse voice. "I came to see you about a letter that I have received from your house agents—a new firm, apparently—demanding the payment of my rent for the last quarter. I gather that you are not aware that I arranged with your uncle to occupy Number Nine rent free."

"Ya-as, I know that, don't you know?" I bleated. "But it's a funny arrangement, your living in my house rent free. I dare say it suited my uncle; but it doesn't suit me. Why did he make the arrangement?"

He looked at me very hard, he raised one hand, and he said in a very solemn voice:

"Number Nine is haunted; and your

uncle thought it better that I, who don't mind ghosts, should live in it rent free than that it should be empty."

My eyeglass nearly fell out of my eye. I had expected to find something in the way of blackmailing at the bottom of the matter—but spooks! This gum millionaire *had* pulled my uncle's leg.

"Well, of all the reasons for making any one a present of a house!" I cried, forgetting to drawl.

"I knew it would surprise you, Lord Garthoyle; but haunted it is. And that's a very good reason—a very good business reason, indeed—for not charging any rent for it," he said earnestly, wagging a finger at me. "It would never do for the newspapers to have columns about a haunted house in Garthoyle Gardens. Your uncle felt that strongly."

I wanted to hear some more, and I said: "Yes; haunted houses in London are a bit off color."

"Just so. It would reduce the property to the level of Bloomsbury. I'm glad you see it."

"I see that. But I don't see why I should let you have the house for nothing, and wear it out, don't you know? If I shut it up for a year or two, the ghosts might get tired of an empty house, and go."

"No; ghosts don't care whether there's any one in a house or not. They haunt it just the same," he assured me, more solemnly than ever. "As an earnest theosophist, I have studied these psychic phenomena, and you may take it from me that it is so."

"All the same, I may as well give this one a chance to get tired and go, don't you know?"

"But an empty house in Garthoyle Gardens—a house empty for months, perhaps years! It injures the rest of the property. It empties other houses. Your uncle saw that very clearly. Why, he asked me—I may say, he begged me—to remain on in Number Nine rent free. He preferred a tenant who paid no rent to no tenant at all."

"I don't, don't you know? And I can get over that emptiness, all right," I

said. "I'll keep the blinds and curtains and leave it looking inhabited. Either you'll have to pay rent, or you'll have to go."

He lost his look of persuading me for my own good, and frowned.

"Well, in that case," he said, "I need not keep my mouth shut about it any longer. I undertook to keep it quiet, of course, and put up with the discomfort. But if I have to pay rent, I do not see why I should not have a thorough investigation of the most interesting phenomenon I have ever come across—an investigation by a committee of experts under the supervision of the *Daily Mail*."

It was so near a blackmailing threat that my first thought was to kick him downstairs. My second thought was that, judging from his build and look, it would be an hour's steady work; and I had already done my work for the day. My third thought was that boots were not business. He was certainly playing with his cards upon the table. He had shown me how he had worked upon my uncle's belief in spooks and his fondness for the Gardens. A newspaper ghost story would harm the property; and, what was worse, I should have to answer scores and scores of letters from my leisured tenants about it. I thought of those letters, and I quailed.

But then the rent was two thousand pounds a year; and any one who has had to live on five thousand pounds a year for seven years knows what two thousand pounds a year is. I was not going to give it up without an effort.

I had been sitting looking at Scruton, with my mouth open, while I thought it out. Now I tried another tack.

"Well, I'm not going to pay for this absurd fancy. A ghost in the twentieth century! It's nonsense, don't you know?" I drawled.

"Fancy? Nonsense? Why, out of my twelve servants, only two will sleep in the house. Some sleep in the rooms over the stables; some in lodgings in Green Street. Your uncle did not find

it nonsense, Lord Garthoyle. He slept in the haunted room and saw the ghost."

"Yes. My uncle would; he had leanings that way, don't you know? But, of course, there's no chance of my seeing it. It wouldn't come if I were there, don't you know?" I drawled.

"But *you* shall see it. It will come, any night you like. It's always there at night!" he cried, in a quite excited way.

I pretended to hesitate; then I said: "Well, I don't believe I shall see any ghost—but if I do, and if it is a ghost, I'll let you have the house rent free for another year. If I don't, you pay your rent."

He hesitated a moment; then he said: "It's a bargain. What night will you come and sleep in the haunted room? How will Saturday night suit you?"

"Saturday night at eleven-thirty. What kind of a ghost is it?"

"It's a woman, who walks, sighing, up and down the room from which Mrs. Bulkeley threw herself. But she's sometimes seen on the stairs. That's what has driven the servants out of the house."

"A woman that sighs doesn't sound very terrifying."

"She is, though. She made me sweat with fright," he said.

And he said it so sincerely that either he was telling the truth, or he was a first-class actor.

I walked down to the front door with him; and I fancied that he was looking pleased with himself, rather as if he had done a good day's work.

"Till Saturday night," he said solemnly, as he went down the steps.

I went into the office and told Jack Scruton's tale. He howled at it. But when he had grown quiet again, he agreed with me that Scruton could make trouble. The people who can afford a house in Garthoyle Gardens are just the very people who believe in all those psychological phenomena. They support the palmists, the mediums, the crystal gazers, and the clairvoyants. They have nothing else to do. My tenants would fuss like fury; many of them would see ghosts in their own houses. It was much better to jog

along quietly with Scruton for a while, and see what did happen, before putting the pressure on him and getting a first-class fuss.

Jack could not understand why a millionaire should stand the inconvenience, why he did not clear out of a house in which servants would not sleep. I had to explain to him that millionaires love to get things cheap—that's how they become millionaires—and a house in Garthoyle Gardens for nothing would tempt any one. Of course, we discussed the question whether Scruton was a millionaire at all. I thought that he was. An ordinary swindler would be more of a gentleman; he would never wear those trousers with a gray morning coat. Jack, too, thought that a swindler would have found a better reason for paying no rent—that a ghost in the twentieth century was too thin. But it seemed to me that the ghost had worked very well with my uncle.

"And, after all," I said, "one night when I was a child I saw the white lady come down the stairs at Garth Royal, or I fancied I did; it comes to exactly the same thing."

I did not get much time to think about the ghost during the next few days; letters, price lists, and house fittings kept me too busy. On the Wednesday I played polo at Hurlingham. A piercing June breeze was blowing from the east, and there were squalls of driving drizzle, colder than sleet. I caught a bad cold; and on Saturday night I went to Number Nine as hoarse as a crow. I did not know my own voice.

A disagreeable butler, looking like a mute, took me to Scruton. Scruton received me as if I had come to a funeral; and I returned his greeting with hearty sneezes.

"I suppose you've quite made up your mind to go through with it?" asked Scruton, in a gloomy voice.

"Rather!" I said. "Ah-tish-u! Ah-tish-u! Ah-tish-u!"

"Come along, then," he said. And he led the way upstairs.

He took me up to a front room on the second floor, a large room, rather barely furnished, with two windows. We had

each a candle. He said that the electric light had not been installed on this floor, and he never used gas. He paused and looked at me seriously; then he said:

"It doesn't really matter. You won't want much light to see her. I didn't."

He paused again; then, with a sudden start, he looked over his shoulder.

I started, too, and looked over his shoulder. I saw nothing. Scruton gave a little shiver, and said quickly:

"I think I'll be going. I don't like this room. Good night."

He slipped quickly out of the door, and I heard him hurry along the corridor and down the stairs.

I felt rather uncomfortable. The candle did not light much of the room, but I set myself to examine it. The walls were not papered, but painted. There was no paneling; and there was not a crack in the surface of the paint. There was no trapdoor in the ceiling. There was a thick Turkey carpet on the floor, and I turned it up for five feet round the edges and made sure that there were no cracks, traps, or loose boards in the floor.

I looked out of the windows for anything in the way of a ladder from the story below, and left up the blinds to let in the moonlight. I locked the door leading to the corridor, and shot the bolt. There was another door in the corner, at the other end of the room, opposite the bed. It opened into an unfurnished dressing room. The door from the corridor into the dressing room was open, and there was no key in it to lock it. The other rooms on the floor were unoccupied. Some of their doors were open, some shut; none were locked.

I locked the door between the dressing room and my bedroom, and shot the bolt over the keyhole.

Well, I was in quite an ordinary room; and no human being could get into it without forcing the door. There was no doubt about that. I should get a genuine ghost—a real physic phenomenon—or I should get nothing at all. Of course, I should get nothing at all.

But I was going to do the thing properly; and I pulled off my coat and

waistcoat and collar, took a warm dressing gown from my bag, and put in on. I lay down on the bed, pulled a blanket over me, and waited. Everything was very quiet, except when I sneezed. I began to think about poor Mrs. Bulkeley, and her throwing herself out of the window. I wondered which of the two windows it was. It was an uncomfortable thing to think of, and I tried to think of something else. Then I began to hear noises; boards creaked and made me start; there were footsteps in the corridor—two—and then silence. I heard a sob, far away, and then another and another, and was some time making out that it was a cistern gurgling. I had firmly made up my mind that it was a jolly uncomfortable room to be in when I fell asleep.

When I awoke, the room was much darker, as if the moon were setting on the other side of the house. I did not want to look around, and was turning over to go to sleep again, when I heard a sigh distinctly.

I jerked myself up on my elbow, and my eyes fell on a figure crossing the room to the farther window. As it came near the window, I saw that it was a woman. I could not see her face, for her long hair fell about it. At the window she turned and sighed. A cold chill ran down my back, and my mouth went dry. She crossed the room nearly to the wall, and turned and sighed, came to the window, turned and sighed again. The cold chills raced down my back, my heart hammered at my ribs, my scalp prickled with the rising hair, and a cold sweat broke out on me. *I was seeing what Mrs. Bulkeley had done before she threw herself out of the window!*

Paralyzed, I watched her cross and recross the room a dozen times, noiseless but for sighs. A rustle, ever so faint a rustle, would have made her less uncanny somehow.

Presently my heart was not hammering so hard against my ribs. I began to pull myself together; and at last with a great effort I said, in a croaking whisper:

"What is it? What do you want?"

The dead woman never turned her head; she crossed and recrossed the room and sighed.

Suddenly I let off a terrific sneeze.

At the sudden burst of sound, the figure started—just the slightest start.

Slight as it was, it was enough for me. The blood rushed through my veins again, and rage drove it. I gathered myself together noiselessly, flung off the blanket, and sprang clean over the foot of the bed, and across the room. With a shriek, the ghost threw up her arms to ward me off; and I clasped an armful of flesh and blood in a soft, soundless woolen robe.

"You little wretch!" I cried, shaking her till her teeth chattered, for I was furious.

"Don't! Don't! You're hurting me! Let me go!" she cried, struggling.

"Not a bit of it! You want a good whipping!" I cried. "Hanged—hanged if I don't kiss you!"

And I did.

"You brute!" she cried, and slapped my face with a most unwraithlike vigor.

The slap sent me sneezing and sneezing, and she took advantage of it to twist out of my grip. When I had done sneezing, my righteous anger had cooled a little. I laughed, rubbed my stinging cheek, and said:

"And now, my young friend, I'm going to have a look at you."

I walked to the mantelpiece, struck a match, lighted the candle—and gazed around an empty room.

Not a creak of door, or a click of lock had marked her going. I gasped and rubbed my eyes. Then I examined the doors; both were locked and bolted. I opened them, and looked out into the corridor and the dressing room; they were empty, dark, and silent. I ran to the head of the stairs, and looked down into silent blackness.

I came back into my room and trod on something soft. It was a slipper of knitted wool. No wonder she had been noiseless! My unsophisticated gum millionaire had provided against everything but my sudden leap.

I locked and bolted the doors again, and went to bed. I thought for a while

about the ghost—she had had a really charming voice—then I went to sleep. When I was awakened by a knocking at my door, the room was bright with sunshine. The disagreeable butler conducted me to the bathroom. I took the slipper with me. There might be a hunt for it while I was in my bath.

When I had dressed, I made another examination of the walls. There was not a crack in them. I went into the corridor, and examined the outside of them. Then I went into the dressing room. I was just turning back, for I had not unlocked the door into my own room, when an odd thing about the lock caught my eye. It had two handles, a big one and a little one. I turned the little handle, and the woodwork of the door swung open, leaving the lock held in its place by its catch and the shot bolt. I turned the little handle back, and two little bolts shot up out of the top of it. They held the lock in the woodwork of the door. It was a most ingenious device; and it was any odds that no one would think to look at the lock when the door was opened, for it stood back against the wall. I should never have noticed it myself, had I not left the door locked. No wonder my poor uncle had been tricked! What a night he must have had!

I had got all I wanted, and a trifle more, by looking like an idiot. I did not trouble to put my eyeglass in my eye and open my mouth. I came downstairs looking like a peer of ordinary intelligence.

Scruton came hurrying out of the library into the hall; and he looked as if he were ready to sympathize deeply.

I said cheerfully:

"Ah, Scruton, good morning! The young woman you employ as ghost is quite kissable, but she has rather large feet."

And I waved the woolen slipper at him.

"Young woman! What young woman? What do you mean?" cried Scruton, and his surprise was very well done.

I laughed and went on down the hall toward the door.

"There was only one young woman in the house last night, the underhousemaid—Jennings. Where is Jennings, Wheatley?" he asked, turning to the butler.

"I've not seen her this morning, sir. She had gone out when I got up, and she hasn't come back," said Wheatley; and when I came to look at him, I saw that he had the same New Zealand kind of look as his master. They were both in it.

"Has this wretched girl been playing this ghost trick on us all? It's monstrous! I'll prosecute her!" cried Scruton.

He was a good actor.

"She's an awfully good locksmith, too!" I said gently. "That trick lock on the dressing-room door is a marvel. Send round that rent, please."

Scruton and his butler gasped at one another. I opened the door, and went down the steps.

Later in the morning came a note from Number Nine. It contained a check for the rent with Scruton's compliments.

CHAPTER III.

I thought about the ghost girl for several days. She was no more a housemaid than I was; housemaids don't have voices like that, and it was her voice that chiefly stuck in my mind. I kept an eye, or rather both eyes, through my uncle's field glasses on Number Nine on the chance of seeing her come out of it. I wanted to see whether her face matched her voice.

All the while I was hard at work, and I did not find work such a bore as I had expected. For one thing, it was a change to have things to do that had to be done; and its being a change softened it. Besides, it was pleasant to find that I could do things. Mugging up price lists of house fittings sounds an awful grind; but when I found that I did get prices into my head, it did not bore me. I found that knowledge of price lists useful in interviewing contractors. I soon began to enjoy interviewing contractors.

Jack Thurman and I, but chiefly Jack, of course, were not very long in discovering that, thanks to the broad and generous ideas of Siddle & Wodgett, his house agents, my uncle had paid through the nose for the upkeep and repairs of the Gardens. I felt that I could spend my money just as well as my contractors could spend it for me. Therefore, I set about getting fresh estimates, and making fresh contracts for all the work. Every contractor came to his interview with an iron resolve to pull my leg. Most of them seemed to want to lick my boots, too, because I was a peer. But it was quite clear that they were not going to let that fact, which seemed to make the leg-pulling process so very easy, interfere with it. The idea seemed to be to pull my leg while they were licking my boots.

I just humored them. I stuck my eyeglass in my eye, left my mouth open, and drawled at them like a perfect ass. After a dozen draws, the prices soared and soared. Then I dropped my eyeglass, shut my mouth, and explained to them that I was not going to pay fifty per cent too much for things. In the jar of the surprise, I got better terms than I should have done if I had not started with the eyeglass.

I was getting on nicely with the new contracts when there came the trouble with the kitchen ranges. Complaints about their kitchen ranges had come from seven out of the twenty-one houses in the Gardens. An expert examined them for me, and reported that they were nearly worn out. Jack and I discussed the matter, and we decided that it would save a good deal of money to buy twenty-one kitchen ranges, and have one contract for the fixing of the lot. It would be far better than buying the seven needed at the moment and then two or three at a time as others wore out. I mugged up some price lists, and went forth to examine the kitchen range in its lair. They will not send kitchen ranges for your inspection.

I had had no idea that there were so many tricks to a kitchen range, or that to the inexperienced they are such a tiresome business. All the morning I

looked at kitchen ranges, and explored their tricks till my head hummed with them. After lunch I started out to see more at some works at Fulham. I was bent on finding the best kitchen range in England before I interviewed a contractor about putting them in.

At Hyde Park corner we were held up by the traffic going into the park. When we started again, Gaston, my chauffeur, asked me to stop. His acute ear had caught something wrong with the sound of the engine. I pulled up just in front of St. George's Hospital; he got out and raised the bonnet of the car.

My mind was full of kitchen ranges, and I was paying no particular attention to anything outside me. Then I saw the pretty girl and the children. She was such a pretty girl that she cleared the kitchen ranges out of my mind. Her eyes were big, and they shone like the stars; wonderful eyes in the prettiest face—a face like a flower!

The children were standing around her—a slip of a girl, about fourteen, pale-faced and thin, holding a thin baby; a boy of eleven; and a thin little girl of seven or eight. They were very poor children, and, judging from their patched clothes, they did not belong to the pretty girl. She was dressed very simply, but prettily, in a light summer frock, and she was wearing it as if she knew how to wear clothes. The children were watching her anxiously.

I just glanced at them, but stared at her. I could not help it. She did not notice it, she did not even see me. She was in trouble of some kind, and was frowning anxiously, as she grappled with one of those out-of-the-way pockets that women love.

Then she stopped grappling with it, and her eyes shone brighter than ever because there were tears in them, and the corners of her mouth drooped.

"I'm so sorry, children, dear," she said. "But I've lost my purse, and I shan't be able to take you, after all. It's no good my going home for more money; it was my last half sovereign."

Her voice matched her eyes; it was charming. But the odd thing was that I

seemed to know it, yet I could not think where I had heard it.

The elder girl looked at her in a way that made me feel uncomfortable; it was so despairing. Then she lifted the baby so that he was against her face, hiding it, and her shoulders shook. The little girl burst into a howl, and the boy stamped on the pavement once, hard. The pretty girl blinked her eyes—and I saw her teeth catch on her quivering lip. It was like the end of a sad play, only it made me ever so much more uncomfortable, and I stepped out of the car.

The boy pulled himself together, and said in a husky voice to the elder girl: "Buck up, Cherlie! Don't tyke on. We'll go inter the park, an' Miss Amber'll plye wiv us."

"The park ain't Kew Gardings. It ain't Kew Gardings!" wailed the little girl.

"What's the matter?" I said.

The boy looked me up and down distrustfully, and I fancied that he liked my face better than my clothes. Then he said:

"Miss Amber's lost 'er purse with 'alf a suvrin in it. She was tyking hus to Kew Gardings for a treat—an' now she can't."

The elder girl took her face, wet with tears, out of the baby's frock, and said, in a heartbroken voice:

"It's Steppie! Steppie's never bin funder out of London than Kensington Gardings; an' 'e was looking forward to it so." I gathered that Steppie was the baby. "An' Verie was lookin' forward to it, too. But she's bin to Kew Gardings once—when she was older nor Steppie. She remembers them, though."

And the tears ran down her cheeks.

"I wants ter go agyne—now!" wailed Verie. "There was a squir'l in a tree."

The boy turned to her and said gruffly:

"It ain't no use you tykin' on, Verie. It ain't, really. The money's gorn."

Verie broke into a louder howl, Cherlie sobbed twice, and I feared that the baby would join in.

I turned to the pretty girl, raised my hat, and said:

"This is a regular tragedy, don't you know? And it's got to be stopped. Suppose we take them out into the country, in my car."

She drew back, frowning a little, and I went on:

"I can't handle them myself, don't you know? I couldn't give them a good time."

She looked from me to the children, and from the children to me; she wrung her hands, and said softly:

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

It was hard for her, of course, to make up her mind what to do—whether she ought to go motoring with a perfect stranger, or let the children slide.

I did not say anything; it was the kind of thing that she must settle for herself. She looked at them again, and the children won.

Her face cleared, she smiled at me; then she said:

"Oh, it would be good of you! It is such a cruel disappointment for them."

I turned to the children and said:

"It's all right. I'm going to take you into the country—the real country—in my motor car."

Verie stopped howling. Cherlie's eyes opened wide, and so did her mouth; and I never saw such thankfulness in any one's face before.

"Oh, Steppie, the real country! Steppie in the real country—where the cows are!" she said, in a whispering voice.

"In you get," I ordered cheerfully, and the two girls stepped quickly toward the car.

"'Ere, 'old on! Wyte a bit!" cried the boy. "She don't mind, Miss Amber don't; but this gov'ner won't want to tyke the likes of us." Then, turning to me, he added sternly: "We're anarchists, we are; an' don't you myke any mistyke abart it!"

Cherlie stopped, the thankfulness dying out of her face; but she looked at the boy as if he had to be obeyed. Verie looked at him, scowled at him defiantly, and climbed into the tonneau.

"Come out of it, Verie!" he said sternly.

"Oh, Robbie, don't you think we might—just fer once? Think of Step-

pie in the country," pleaded Cherie, in such a pitiful voice that it gave me a lump in my throat.

"Oh, that's all right! I don't mind!" I said quickly. "Anarchists—I rather like 'em. In fact, I'm a bit of an anarchist myself. I never could stick the House of Lords—never—I give you my word. I tell you what—I'll be a full-blown anarchist myself all the afternoon."

I said it straight off without a break, for the children had got to go.

"Strite?" asked the boy.

"Straight," declared I.

"If it's like that, thank yer, gov'ner," said the boy with a grunt of thankfulness. And he grinned all over his face as he held Cherie's arm while she got into the car.

I held open the door for Miss Amber.

"It is good of you," she said, as she stepped into it. And she looked at me in a way that I couldn't have deserved if I had given the children a house in Garthoyle Gardens and an income to keep it up.

"Harrod's!" I ordered Gaston, and got in after her.

The tonneau is big, but it was only when I saw how much room the children left on the broad seat that I realized what thin little things they were. As we settled down, I took stock of them. I saw that there were a great many patches in their clothes. But their faces were clean, and all the more recent dirt had been scrubbed off their discolored little claws. They were claws.

It struck me that there had been a lot of careful preparation for their jaunt to Kew.

They were sitting rather stiffly, looking very serious, as if they were a bit overcome by the grandeur of their position. They were still busy getting used to it when we came to Harrod's.

I stepped out, went to the provision department, and said that I wanted a picnic hamper for a dozen children, and that it must have lots of nourishing food in it, chickens and tongues. Also, I wanted a kettle and tea things; and I wanted them now—right away—my car

was waiting. They know me in that department, and they bustled. In about five minutes, I followed the hamper out, saw it set in front beside Gaston, and got into the car.

"Chipperfield Common," I said to Gaston. Verie's words about a squirrel in a tree had suggested it to me.

The children had been chattering in an excited way when I came out of Harrod's; but when I got into the car they turned stiff again.

Then Robbie broke the ice by saying: "My! Ain't it fine? A real moter car!"

Cherie bent down to the baby in her lap, and cooed:

"In a moter car, Steppie—ridin' in a moter car!"

"So you're anarchists, are you?" I asked, to set them going.

All their faces turned to me, and Robbie responded promptly:

"Yes, we're anarchists, an' so's father. My name's Robespierre Briggs—after 'im what myde the French Revolution. An' Cherie's name is Charlotte Corday Briggs; an' Verie's is Vera Sasilivitch Briggs—after 'er wot threw bombs at the czar. An' Steppie—he's Stepniak Briggs. He threw bombs, too, did Stepniak."

"I'm goin' to throw bombs when I grow up," announced Verie.

"An' so am I when Steppie's grown up enough not to want me lookin' after 'im any more," said Cherie, in a cheerful voice.

"An' I'm goin' to myke bombs for 'em to throw. I've got a book on chemistry, an' father 'elps me to learn it in the evenin's," said Robbie.

"Well, they are a desperat band!" I exclaimed to Miss Amber.

She was looking at them with pitiful eyes.

"I think it's rather dreadful," she said.

"But if you throw bombs, you'll go to prison!" I said to the children.

"Yes; but then we'll be martyrs of the revolution, an' that's a glorious thing to be," declared Robbie.

"P'r'aps we'll be 'anged," put in Verie cheertully.

"An' if you're 'anged, you're hever so much more a martyr of the revolution. Everybody says so," said Robbie.

"I'm goin' ter throw bombs at ministers," said Verie. "I told Carrie Evans I was goin' ter throw a bomb at 'er minister, an' she pulled my 'air."

"There you go agyne, Verie! You do mix things up so," said Robbie, in a vexed tone. "I keep tellin' yer that it's cab'net ministers, an' not chapel ministers as you throw bombs at."

"Carrie Evans said she's got a minister, an' I said I'd throw a bomb at 'im, an' she pulled my 'air; an' I will throw a bomb at 'im," repeated Verie firmly.

"She won't understand; an' I've told her agyne an' agyne," said Robbie, in a tone of aggravation.

"I'm goin' ter throw a bomb at Carrie Evans' minister when I grow up," said Verie, in a singsong.

Cherlie had been holding Stepniak up and pointing things out to him. Now she cried:

"Look! There's a cow! Look, Stepnie! Look! There's a cow in a field!"

The sight diverted the minds and talk of the other anarchists from bombs; and little by little, as it slid deeper into the country, the car became a perfect babel. They were all calling to one another at once to look at this and look at that, and all at the same time asking us questions about what they saw. Always there was something fresh, and the eyes of the anarchists grew bigger and bigger.

Miss Amber was charming with them. She answered their questions, and her pretty eyes hunted the countryside for things to point out to them. Her face was glowing with pleasure at their pleasure. I did enjoy looking at it, and helping her find fresh things for the anarchists to admire.

But all the while her voice bothered me. I could have sworn that I had heard it before; but for the life of me I could not remember when or where. It was odd, too, that I did not believe that I had ever seen her face before. I could not have forgotten it if I had, for I never forget a pretty face, and I can

very soon recall when and where I have seen it before. It was certainly strange that I should know her voice and not her face.

Bushey and Watford gave the children a rest from their excitement. Once in the streets again, they did not trouble even to look about them. They gave their eyes a rest, and sat back, telling one another again and again of things that they had seen.

In the middle of it, Robbie asked:

"What's yer nyme, gov'ner? We can call Miss Amber by hern; but we don't know yourn to call yer by."

I hesitated a moment; then I said:

"My name's Garth."

Somehow, I couldn't say Lord Garthoyle. It did not seem to go with these children. Besides, all my friends call me Garth, and it is my business name. After all, I had come out to buy kitchen ranges for Garth & Thurman.

When we came out of Watford into the country again, the anarchists again grew excited; and I grew yet more friendly with Miss Amber, helping her to tell them things. We reached Chipperfield Common, all rather hot and out of breath, though we had been sitting still for nearly an hour. But when once the anarchists were out of the car, on the common itself, among the flowers and the pine trees, they just went mad. Robbie and Verie ran round us in rings, screaming; and Cherlie jumped up and down, with her eyes starting out of her head, as she tried to point out to the staring Stepniak everything at once.

"Look here! They're going mad! What are we going to do with three mad anarchists?" I asked Miss Amber.

"They won't go mad; they're too happy," she assured me, smiling.

"Well, it's your show, not mine. You'll take the responsibility," I said.

"Oh, no, no! It's your show. They owe it to you. I could never have given them anything like this," she cried.

"Not a bit of it. It's your idea altogether. I should never have dreamed of it. Therefore, it's your show. And it's awfully fine of you to do this kind of thing."

"Fine? Why, I love it!" she cried.

"I expect you do love fine things," I said.

She turned away from my eyes with a little blush. I fancy that I was looking what I thought of her.

"Cherlie, give Steppie to me. You must want to run about with the others," she said.

She gave Steppie a finger, and I gave him another, and he toddled along between us like a kind of link.

"How did you meet these anarchists?" I asked.

"I found them in the park one afternoon, and then they came several times to see me, and by degrees I've got to know them quite well. They are such nice children."

"And I suppose you have spent all your pocket money on them ever since?"

"I haven't enough really to do anything for them," she said, with a sigh. "I can only give them a treat now and then—tea and cakes. The expedition to Kew was quite out of the common—a great affair. At least, it would have been, if it had come off. But this is much better; absolutely splendid!"

"Have you many of these protégés, or are these all?" I asked.

"There are two other lots of small children I have found in the park; but they're not as poor as the Briggses and not nearly so interesting."

"That anarchist talk is rather strong, though."

"Oh, do you think so? Don't you think it's very natural—for them? Why, even I—sometimes—when I think of the wretched, poisonous life these children lead—I feel I could be an anarchist myself."

"And throw bombs?"

"Yes; I feel I could," she declared quite seriously. "There are thousands and thousands of children like these. But, of course, you don't understand. You haven't seen them faint with hunger."

"Things do seem wrong. I wonder that the government doesn't do something to stop it," said I.

"Things are so stupid—so utterly stupid!" she exclaimed, frowning.

We were silent a while. I was thinking that I might look into this matter of the children a little. I was finding my work as house agent not half bad. I might put in a little work in the House of Lords, and try to get this matter of the children looked into. In the meantime, I might arrange a series of anarchist outings; and she might help me with them, as she was helping me this afternoon. And I wanted her to help me very much. I did like the way she carried herself, and she walked so lightly!

We went on among the pines slowly, to suit Stepniak's toddle; and the other anarchists kept rushing up to show us the wonderful things that they had found, or to shout at us the wonderful things that they had seen.

Then we came to the Pool of the Twelve Apostles, and she said:

"You have brought us to a beautiful place."

"I never saw it look so beautiful," I returned; and I never had. I had never seen it with her in it before.

I think she understood, for she flushed a little.

"Fancy being able to motor here any day you like, and to be able to bring children—children like these—with you! Oh, if only I could do things like that for children!" she cried.

I nearly offered, then and there, to put myself and my cars at her disposal as often as she wanted us. But I am not impatient, and I thought it wise to go slow. If I tried to hurry things, it was very likely that I should spoil it all.

Then Verie came rushing up, purple with joy, screaming:

"There's a squir'l in a tree! There's a squir'l in a tree! Bring Steppie to see the squir'l!"

I picked up Stepniak, and we hurried off to see the squirrel, Miss Amber as excited and delighted as the anarchists. We all tried, in an excited way, to get Stepniak to see the squirrel; I grew as keen on making him see it as Cherlie and Miss Amber. They were sure he saw it; I was not; and we ar-

gued about it almost in a heated way. Stepniak seemed awfully solemn for his age, and I did not believe that he was really keen on seeing a squirrel. Miss Amber said that I underrated his intelligence.

The squirrel took us to a tree where he found two other squirrels, and they played about in it. The anarchists were a long time getting tired of watching them; and, when they did, I found that it was nearly four o'clock.

"Hadh'n't they better have tea now?" I asked Miss Amber. "Then they will be ready for supper before we start back. They may as well have two meals while they are about it. They look as if they could do with them."

"Oh, you do have good ideas! That will be splendid!" she cried, and her eyes shone brighter than ever.

"It's just common sense," I said. "By the way, is Amber your Christian name or your surname?"

"It's my Christian name; my surname's Devine." She answered with a shade of hesitation.

"I suppose you spell it with an 'i'? You ought to," I said firmly.

She smiled.

"No; it's spelled with an 'e,' and that's how it ought to be spelled."

"With an 'i,'" said I.

"With an 'e,'" said she.

"Well, I know best; but we won't argue about it," said I.

We went back in a body to the car. Gaston had got hot water for the tea, and a big jug of milk for the anarchists. I thought that a fire would be better fun for them than a spirit stove, and they grew immensely excited about it. There seemed to be no limit to their power of getting excited.

When it had burned up a little, we began to unpack the hamper. We laid the tablecloth between two pine trees, and set the knives and forks and tea-cups on it. Then Amber took a cake out of the hamper. At the sight of it, the children, who had been crying out to one another how pretty the cups were and how the spoons and forks shone, suddenly were quite silent. We paused in our unpacking and looked at them.

They were staring at the cake in a painful kind of way, with a horrible craving in their eyes. They made me think of hungry little wolves. Verie's mouth was working as if she were already eating. Then Stepniak wailed, and held out his hands.

"Why—why—they must have been hungry all the while—all the time they have been laughing and screaming and enjoying themselves! Hungrier than ever I was in my life—all the way from town!" I said, more than a bit shocked.

"Yes; they forgot it. How dreadful!" said Amber, in a hushed voice.

She had turned rather pale.

It took me about five seconds to cut up that cake and hand it around. To see the look of thankfulness on those children's faces as their mouths filled made me feel positively beastly.

"Steady, now, children! Don't wolf it!" I ordered.

I might just as well have spoken to real wolves.

Amber had already mixed a cup of cake and milk for Stepniak, and was feeding him slowly. I got out a dish of chicken and tongue, and a pile of bread and butter, and sat the children down to it. They seemed to find cutting up the slices too slow for their appetites. When they got a leg or a wing bone, they just took it in their fingers and gnawed it happily.

Amber kept saying:

"Gently, children—gently! Don't eat so fast, please!"

They looked at her in a helpless sort of way, as if they would have liked to do as she wanted, but could not. I did not get out any more food; and when they had come to the end of that I said:

"Nothing more to eat for five minutes. Come along and let's boil the kettle."

They came, and were interested in the boiling of the kettle and the making of the tea; but all the while they kept looking at the hamper as if they couldn't keep their eyes off it. When the five minutes were up, their eyes still glistened at the food, but they ate it more slowly. They did enjoy it. But

it was only toward the end of the meal that Cherlie remembered their manners and reminded them sternly. When Stepniak was full, he went to sleep; and when the other anarchists were full, they lay on their sides, looking drowsy and very happy, talking in jerks about the chicken and the cakes.

They were not quiet long; they were soon on their feet again, and running about, leaving us to talk to one another. I had made up my mind that I had never heard Miss Devine's voice before, but I did not find it any less pretty. We talked about the children. She told me that they were motherless; that their father worked for a sweatshop tailor; and that his earnings were wretched.

We talked over the whole state of things in the slums; but of course we did not know how it was to be stopped. Only it was plain that that was what the government was there for—we were both sure of that—and I began to think seriously about going down to the House of Lords and looking into the matter. I might put the fat in the fire, and get a little quiet fun out of doing it.

Then Robbie came running up, very eager.

"Will you come and plye anarchists wiv us, Miss Amber?" he begged. "There ain't no one to throw bombs at!"

We rose, and I said:

"This is a new game. How do you play it?"

"She knows. She's plyed it wiv us in the park," answered Robbie, and he ran off.

"It's very simple," she explained, smiling. "They throw bombs at us, and we fall down dead."

"It sounds a cheerful game," said I.

We walked through the pines, and, suddenly, with loud cries of "Bang!" the hidden anarchists threw bombs of bracken at us. We fell down dead, and the anarchists fled, yelling joyfully, to their lairs. Then we rose, and they stalked us again and threw more bombs at us.

When they threw the fifth lot of bombs, to make it a bit more realistic, Amber gave a little scream. I fell

down, all right; but I got up very slowly, almost as upset as if the bombs had been real. I knew now where I had heard her voice; the scream had brought it back to me. She was the ghost girl, the girl whom Scruton had employed as ghost to frighten me into letting him live rent free at Number Nine. So she had screamed when I had sprung across the bedroom and caught her.

I was sick. When I got up I found that a kind of dullness had come over the common, though I suppose the sun was shining as brightly as ever. This girl had taken a hand in Scruton's shady game; she actually had helped him trick my uncle out of a quarter's rent.

It seemed simply incredible; but it wasn't. I could have sworn to the ghost girl's voice among a million voices, and it was the voice of Amber Devine. I looked at her, and, sure as I was, it was hard to believe it. She looked too pretty—far too pretty, with her flushed face and shining eyes—to have been mixed up in a shady game like that. She was so happy because the children were happy. And then the way she had treated those children, spending her last half sovereign to take them to Kew, trying all she knew to give them a good time—it was past understanding; it did not go with that ghost trick at all. I must be wrong. But I wasn't.

We went on playing anarchists, but I had lost interest in the game. Then the children tired of it. We sat down on the bank of the pool, and Amber told them stories. For anarchists, they seemed to me uncommonly fond of fairies. I did not listen much to the stories, though she told them very well. The ghost trick was worrying me—the stories did not fit in with it—and I was glum. She seemed to see that something had gone wrong with me, for two or three times she looked at me in a questioning way.

I was glad when we set about giving the anarchists their supper. It took my mind off the ghost trick. They were very hungry again; and she was hungry, too, and enjoyed her supper thoroughly.

I wished that I had thought to bring some champagne for her.

Supper refreshed the anarchists, and we played hide and seek in the twilight. It ought to have been delightful playing hide and seek with Amber Devine among the pines; but the ghost trick stuck in my mind. It had spoiled everything.

It was dusk when we started back to town. I carried the sleeping Stepniak to the car, for the ghost girl and Cherie had about run their legs off. At the car, the anarchists lingered a little, as if they could not drag themselves away from the common. In the car, they chattered for a little about the things they had seen, and done, and eaten.

Cherie said:

"Oh, it was a beautiful day! Such a beautiful day for Steppie!"

Then they all fell asleep in a lump.

The ghost girl took the sleeping Stepniak from the sleeping Cherie. I covered the sleeping children with a rug, and drew another round ourselves. We sat quiet for a while, and I could see her eyes shining. Then she began to talk about the anarchists again, and the children like them—how she wished that she could take a hundred of them into the country every day, and feed them. Her voice grew angry and thrilling as she talked of what a shame it was that they should live, half fed and half clothed, in the pigsties they called homes. But somehow or other, I had lost my keenness; and I did not think any more about the House of Lords.

She was sincere enough in her talk, and that again did not go with the ghost trick. All the time that she talked, I kept thinking of it, and two or three times it was on the tip of my tongue to ask her why she had played it. But I pulled myself up. She said that she had had a beautiful time; why should I spoil the end of it?

We ran into London, the children still asleep, and I could see her face again now in the light of the lamps. She told me that the anarchists lived in Lambeth, in one room, with their father; and on the way she helped me slip the gold out of my sovereign case, wrapped in a

tenner, into the pocket of the sleeping Cherie.

Then we awoke Robbie to guide us; and he piloted the car through very dirty streets to the very dirtiest. As we pulled up, a man came rushing out of the house, and cried in a frightened, shaky voice:

"My Gord! Which of 'em's bin run over?"

"We're all right, father. We've bin for a moter ride in the country," said Robbie, in an important voice.

"Lor'! What a turn the car did give me! I thought for cert'in as 'ow one of yer 'ad bin run over." Mr. Briggs was panting.

We helped the sleepy children out, and their father took Stepniak. He stood looking rather dazed from the fright that the car had given him, and they huddled around him, telling him of their afternoon. I pulled the hamper out of the car—there were a couple of meals left in it—and set it down beside them.

Cherie was saying:

"Think of it, father! Steppie in the country—the *real* country—all the afternoon! An' ridin' in a moter car!"

I told Gaston to start the car, to get off before the thanks began. As it slid away, we called back, "Good night, children!" And they called good night to us shrilly, again and again.

I was glad, very glad, that I had been able to give them a good time; but I did wish that I had not found out that Amber Devine was the ghost girl.

When we came out of the slums, I asked:

"And now where shall I drive you home?"

"Garthoyle Gardens, please," she said.

"Oh, you live in Garthoyle Gardens? Do you know Lord Garthoyle himself?" I said.

"No. Is there a Lord Garthoyle? I didn't know," she said.

She was certainly speaking the truth, and it made things more puzzling than ever. She had evidently played the trick on me without knowing who I was. It was a good thing that I had been as

hoarse as a crow that night, so that she had not recognized my voice as I had recognized hers. That would certainly have robbed the anarchists of their afternoon. Besides, there was that kiss.

At the end of the Gardens, she asked me to stop, and I helped her out of the car. The light fell full on her face and shining eyes as she thanked me for having given the children such a happy afternoon. Then she paused. I felt that she was waiting for me to suggest taking them out again; but I would not arrange anything of the kind.

I could keep an eye on the anarchists—I knew their address. I could send them money at times, or I might find a job for their father down at Garth Royal. But at the moment I did not want to see Miss Devine again. At least, I did want to, but I thought that I had much better not.

"Good night, and again thank you a thousand times," she said, and held out her hand.

I shook it, and said good night. She turned, and went down the pavement. A few steps off I heard her sigh.

I got into the car, feeling very gloomy. If only I had not recognized her as the ghost girl!

CHAPTER IV.

It is curious how I went on feeling annoyed that Amber Devine was the girl who had played the ghost trick on me. I had spent only an afternoon and part of an evening with her, and during most of that time I had been occupied with the anarchists; yet the fact that she was the ghost girl stuck in my mind and became a rankling grievance. It began to spoil my temper, and I was getting quite morose.

Jack Thurman, too, was in a gloomy state about something or other; and when, one day, I cursed things generally, he surprised me by agreeing with everything that I said.

My grievance about the ghost girl seemed to affect everything. It made me less keen on running the Gardens, and even my polo bored me. However, I got my twenty-one kitchen ranges, and

made a very fair contract for the fixing up of them in the twenty-one houses, not all at once, but one at a time. Also, I sold the twenty-one old kitchen ranges at a very fair price to a Yorkshire man of an unusually speculative turn of mind. At least, it seemed to me that he must be. What on earth can there be in the way of openings for a worn-out kitchen range? However, it was not for me to balk his fancy.

I had already found that being a house agent means continual work. Just as you think that you have got everything cleared up for a week ahead, something fresh crops up. If there was not actually anything to be done, there were always letters from fussy tenants to answer.

Of all the tenants who ever rented a house, Sir Marmaduke Ponderbury is the fussiest. I suppose that I get eight fussy letters a week from him; and the only consolation is that they are typewritten and easy to read—not like Lady Pedder's—because he ambles about in public affairs, and keeps a secretary to write his correspondence. One morning there came from him a letter addressed to me personally, and not to Garth & Thurman. It ran:

DEAR LORD GARTHOYLE: I am addressing myself to you personally, and not to Messrs. Garth & Thurman, because you are one of my own order. I am sorry to have to inform you that circumstances have arisen that will compel me to abandon the rest of the lease of this house. Hieroglyphics are written nearly every day on the inside wall of my porch, and I have the gravest suspicion of their purport. I will do myself the honor of calling on you at twelve o'clock to acquaint you with the matter. Under these circumstances, you will not be surprised by my requesting you to release me from the rest of my tenancy; and I am sure that, making the request to one of my own order, it will not be refused. Yours sincerely,
MARMADUKE PONDERBURY.

"What does the preposterous old idiot mean?" I said; and I read the letter aloud.

Miss Wishart, my stenographer and bookkeeper, smiled; Jack Thurman laughed.

"He can't suppose that I'm going to let him off his rent because somebody

scrawls on the wall of his porch?" I said.

"Can't he, though?" said Jack. "You don't know old Ponderbury. He's the largest spoiled child in England, and the most spoiled. His mother spoiled him; his tutors spoiled him—he never went to a school or a university; his wife spoiled him; he has always lived surrounded by the oiliest gang of sycophants the world holds, and they spoil him worst of all. He believes that the world was made for him, and that he's the most important man in it, or, at any rate, will be when he's got the peerage he's after. I've heard him say the most incredible things—quite incredible. The only person who doesn't spoil him is Mur—his daughter; and he hates her."

I was a little surprised. Jack does not often let himself go; and his eyes were sparkling, and he was scowling.

"Oh, you know them?" I said.

"Yes, I know them," said Jack, scowling worse than ever.

"What does he mean by calling me one of his own order? His father got the baronetcy for making crockery," I said.

"The old snob thinks himself a born aristocrat of the bluest blood. He's trying to get a peerage to make it bluer."

"These new-rich ones make me feel tired every time," I said.

"Then old Ponderbury should make you collapse. He's the most tedious old swollen-headed rotter that breathes!" said Jack savagely.

"You seem to have made up your mind about him fairly distinctly," I said.

"I have," said Jack.

"I suppose he has played the spoiled child with you."

"All over me," said Jack.

"And you say he has a daughter?" I said.

"Yes, he has," said Jack.

And he hunched himself over the ledger he was working at, as if he did not wish to talk about it.

When, at five minutes past twelve, I went to the library to interview Sir Marmaduke, I thought it well to stick

my eyeglass in my eye, leave my mouth open, and look like an idiot. I thought it probable that Sir Marmaduke would be quite open with me; but it was just as well to give him every encouragement. We should get on quicker. He would start the leg-pulling process without delay; and I should know what he was up to without wasting time.

When I came into the room, a large, round, gray man bounced up out of a chair, and bounced across the room at me; just bounced.

"My dear Lord Garthoyle, I am charmed to make your acquaintance," he squeaked, in a high voice that did not go with his round largeness. "But I regret—I regret that it should be under these painful circumstances—these extremely painful circumstances!"

He seized my hand, and waggled it flabbily in a hand uncommonly like a big, uncooked sole.

"How are you?" I drawled. "What—er—er—are they?"

He sat down slowly and solemnly; and I sized up his large, oblong, flabby face, and his green eyes under thin eyebrows at the bottom of a forehead that ran well on to the top of his head, owing to the retiring hair.

"These hieroglyphics—these menacing hieroglyphics," he squeaked.

"Ah—er—yes; the scrawls on your porch," I drawled.

"Scrawls! No, no, Lord Garthoyle! I wish I could think it. I tried to think of it as a freak of some idle boy—even a hoax. They are hieroglyphics, drawn with a deliberate intent."

"Does it matter?" I drawled.

"Matter? Matter? It is a most serious affair. But I see that you don't appreciate its seriousness—its public importance. But perhaps you do not follow public affairs—the affairs of the great world—with close interest."

"They're not much in my line, don't you know?" I drawled; and I opened my mouth a little wider.

"No, no. I quite understand. It is a weakness of our order. I have always deplored that so large a percentage of it should devote itself to other vocations. Why, if the whole of our order

devoted itself to public affairs, we could absorb them. We should have a monopoly. There would be no room for those wretched middle classes and the rest of the lower orders. Still, there are a few of us who devote ourselves to public affairs. I myself have figured largely in public life for many years, not only as president of the Landlords' Defense League, but in many other ways as the stanch opponent of the forces that threaten our order with destruction. I have made enemies—many dangerous enemies—by stemming the flood of anarchy and socialism that is striving to sweep us away. I am a barrier, Lord Garthoyle—a barrier." And he paused to look tremendously impressive.

"A barrier? Where they take tickets?" I drawled, looking as puzzled as I could.

"No, no, no!" he squeaked, frowning. "I am a barrier to the advance of that flood. I am the lion in the path." He looked more like a codfish in the path. "It cannot move on to its task of fell destruction till it has overwhelmed me. It has recognized this, and it is gathering its energies to sweep me away."

"That's deucedly interesting," I said. "Are you backing yourself not to be swept? I'm backing the flood. What odds will you take?"

I pulled out my betting book, and looked quite lively.

Sir Marmaduke was pulled up short. He stuttered:

"This is not a matter for an idle w-w-wager! I've n-n-never made a b-b-bet in all my life!"

"But this is such a good bet for you, don't you know?" I persuaded. "Why, it's the chance of a lifetime. If you lose, you don't pay. Your executors pay."

"No, no, no!" he spluttered.

"Come, I'll lay you even money, and we'll fix a time limit—say, a year," I said.

"No, no!" he squeaked.

"But think what a comfort it will be to you when the bomb bursts, or the knife jabs in your back, to think that your *executors* will have to pay," I persisted.

"I will *not* bet!" he squealed. "I came to talk about these hieroglyphics; and you won't listen!"

"Oh, all right! Fire away!" I said, in a disgusted tone.

He panted a little, and then he began: "These hieroglyphics are a warning and a threat. I am sure of it. When I first saw them, I took no notice of them beyond telling my butler to wipe them away. He did so. They—were—renewed. My suspicions were awakened; they have been confirmed. The hieroglyphics are not only renewed when they are wiped away; they change. Every three or four days, Lord Garthoyle, they change. They grow more threatening. To-day there is a distinct coffin and a bomb."

"That's—er—pretty thick, don't you know?" I said.

"Thick? Thick? It would appall the stoutest heart. And we *can't* find out who draws them. One of the most astute firms of private detectives in London has been watching the house night and day for a fortnight. The hieroglyphics are drawn under their very eyes. They must be. The affair has grown so sinister that the time has come for me to decide whether I should retire from the fight or continue the conflict. There is a great meeting of the Landlords' League shortly; if I speak out, the forces of anarchy will dash themselves upon me. But it has been suggested that I might speak out and then retire into a prudent seclusion for a few months. That is why I have come to you. You are a large owner of property; I am its chief defender. Are you willing to stand by me, if I pursue this desperate course, by releasing me from the rest of my tenancy? Then, when these miscreants come along to accomplish their fell purpose, they will be balked by an empty house."

"I think I'd rather not," I drawled. "Two thousand a year is two thousand a year."

"But what is a paltry two thousand a year compared with the enormous interests at stake—the dearest interest of our order? Consider that, Lord Garthoyle.

We owners of property stand or fall together."

"I don't fall; the flood isn't out after me," I said.

"But your order—you will surely stand by your order."

"You're doing the standing by, and I'm doing the looking on—admiring, and all that sort of thing, don't you know? Now, about that bet——"

"This is callousness!" he sputtered.

"Not a bit of it," I drawled. "But rent's so uninteresting. It's the sort of thing that's bound to happen. At least, it always happened to me till I came to live in my own house. There's no point in interfering with rent. But a bet's quite another thing—more sporting—and I'll lay you——"

"I'm not going to bet! I'm not going to bet! I keep telling you so!" he squealed. "And you don't realize that I'm making this proposal in your own interest. You don't want to see Number Twelve shattered with a bomb?"

"I don't mind. It's insured. In fact, I should like to touch the insurance company for a bit. I'm always shelling out to it," I said calmly.

"But the loss of life—surely you are not indifferent to that!"

"No! Oh, no! I shall be very sorry, don't you know? But it's your game. I don't put up the stakes," I said.

He jumped up and began bouncing. He did look uncommonly like a large, gray, india-rubber ball. And, as he bounced, he spluttered; and I caught sentences about "astonishing insensibility," "blind to the clarion call of duty," and something about imperial Rome being "wrecked by callousness." There seemed to be a lot of the orator in him.

At last I said, in a hopeful voice:

"It's quite likely that they won't throw any bomb at all. They'll just knife you on the quiet, or plug you from behind with a revolver. I don't think you need worry about Number Twelve. I shan't."

He stopped bouncing, and stared at me with his eyes wide open; and his face turned green in spots.

"And is this the gratitude one gets

from one's order?" he asked, in a kind of squeaky whisper.

"Oh, I'm grateful," I answered, smiling at him pleasantly. "I should send a—what-d'ye-call-it?—a wreath to your funeral. I couldn't do less, don't you know?"

He went a little greener; but he did not seem to be able to find anything to say. I fancied that I was getting square with him for bothering me with his fussy letters. Then I had a happy idea; I said that I would come and take a look at the hieroglyphics myself, and I bustled him out of the house, and across to his own. He did not say much—he seemed to be thinking hard—and he did not bounce. He walked rather feebly. Two or three times he looked back over his shoulder; I fancied he was looking for that knife.

We came to Number Twelve, and went up into the porch of it. On the left-hand, inside wall were these figures, drawn in chalk:



I looked at them and said:

"I suppose this thing on the left is what you call the coffin? I don't call it a coffin; it might be anything, don't you know? Is the round thing with the cross in the middle the bomb?"

"Yes; that is undoubtedly the rough drawing of a bomb," he said, in a fainting kind of voice.

"I don't see it a bit," I said. "What's the thing next it?"

"An infernal machine," he whispered.

The door opened, and a very pretty, dark-eyed, dark-haired girl came out. As she came out, she looked quickly from us to the hieroglyphics, and back again. I dropped my eyeglass, and shut my mouth. There was no point in looking like a perfect ass before her.

Sir Marmaduke introduced her to me as his daughter, Muriel, and I explained:

"I was just looking at the hieroglyphics. I don't see that they're coffins and bombs and infernal machines."

"I say they are, and Mr. Manders

agrees with me," said Sir Marmaduke solemnly, in a disagreeable tone.

"Mr. Manders always agrees with you. They're just scrawls," she said sharply.

"I never expect any sympathy or understanding from *you*, Muriel. I do not look for it. *We* are agreed that the figures are a coffin, a bomb, an infernal machine, a bomb of a different pattern, and the figure four."

"I'm not agreed," I said. "I think they might be anything."

"I'm sure that they're a chocolate box, a hot-cross-bun, a cake, a plum pudding, and the figure four," said Miss Ponderbury.

"Of course, I might have known it! I stand on the verge of a tremendous peril, and all I get from my daughter—my only daughter—is mockery!" he snapped; and he was no longer greenish, but a nice, bright red.

"You're so silly, father! You let the Manders humbug you about anything," she said.

"It is like you to sneer at my faithful friends," he snarled.

It did not seem to me that it was part of the duty of the complete house agent to assist at the family scraps of his tenants; and I said in a loud voice:

"I think I'll just take these figures."

They stopped scrapping to watch me draw the figures in my betting book. In the middle of it, I looked up and found Miss Ponderbury smiling at me in an odd sort of way, as if she thought me silly to bother with them.

With a little bow, she said:

"Good-by, Lord Garthoyle. It is silly of you, father, to let the Manders worry you about these scrawls."

And she went down the steps and along the pavement toward Mount Street.

I was just finishing the drawing when a small, sharp-looking woman bustled out of the house, and went off down the pavement after her.

"That's got them," I said, putting my betting book into my pocket.

"It only remains to discover what the hieroglyphics mean as a whole," said Sir Marmaduke.

"They do look pretty bad," I said.

Sir Marmaduke looked very gloomy. He seemed to be thinking about the funeral wreath.

"Perhaps you had better chuck it and go abroad," I suggested.

"Never! I will never desert my order!" he squeaked; but he did not seem very full of enthusiasm.

"Well, I'll bet fifty to forty that these anarchists, if they are anarchists, will out you, all right. Your executors to pay," I said.

"I *won't* bet about such a thing! I consider the suggestion monstrous!" he shrilled furiously.

"Well, if you won't, you won't. But anyhow I'll leave the bet open. You may change your mind," I said cheerfully. "Good-by."

He returned my good-by peevishly.

I went home and into my office. I showed Jack my drawings of the hieroglyphics. He did not take much interest in them, but he was interested in Miss Ponderbury's scrap with her gutta-percha papa, and said that she was treating him as he needed to be treated.

"Well, I hope I helped to frighten the silly old india-rubber ball into some out-of-the-way corner where he can't bother me with his infernal fussy letters," I said.

"It's possible. Let's hope for the best," said Jack.

We discussed the question—at least, I did; Jack did not seem interested in it—of who was playing the trick on Sir Marmaduke.

At last Jack said:

"It might be anybody. If any one were introduced to the preposterous old idiot, the first thing he would go and do would be to scrawl hieroglyphics on his porch wall."

"He is a bouncing temptation to the average sportsman," I argued.

It was plain that Sir Marmaduke's theory about anarchists was rubbish; but, to make quite sure, I went around to see that rising young politician, my cousin, Herbert Polkington, and asked him if Sir Marmaduke Ponderbury was

sufficiently important for anarchists to throw bombs at.

Herbert is an austere fish, and meek; but at my question his eyes flashed, his pasty face turned pink, he thumped his table, and cried:

"Important! Ponderbury important? If being the most pestiferous old busybody in London, and badgering everybody to be made a peer for it, is being important, then he is important. He pesters my life out, since I'm one of the people who look after the party rewards. I get hundreds of letters from him, and he's always forcing himself on me here and everywhere. I wish to heavens the anarchists would blow him up!"

He had cleared my mind of the last bit of uneasiness about the hieroglyphics; but I decided to back Ponderbury to get his peerage every time I got the chance. A man who could so infuriate Herbert that he turned rose pink at just the mention of his name, was dead certain of it. He must be a perfectly pertinacious beggar.

I soon had proof of it. I had five letters in the next three days, begging me to stand by my order and release him from his tenancy. Then he advertised in the *Daily Mail*, offering one hundred pounds reward for information about the person who scrawled the figures on the wall of his porch.

I laughed when Jack showed me the advertisement; but I did not laugh when the Ponderbury mystery, with pictures and explanations of the hieroglyphics, filled columns in the papers, and the swarm of amateur detectives settled in the Gardens. There were scores of them. I could not go out of the house without getting piercing glances from eagle eyes, and being dogged by half a dozen men and women to my club. There was always a group in the porch of Number Twelve, examining the scrawls; and twice I saw Muriel Ponderbury in the window, watching them with great enjoyment.

They were a nuisance, but since they were always there, on the watch, they prevented any new hieroglyphics being written, and soon began to lose their

keenness. They grew fewer and fewer every day, and it was not long before the last one had gone.

The very next morning, on the same wall of Sir Marmaduke's porch, there was a freshly scrawled figure, the figure that he had called a bomb. This one:



He must have wired the news to the evening papers, for, before noon, the amateur detectives were swarming again. And for the rest of the day they were all over the place.

After dinner, that night, I was strolling across to the garden to smoke a cigar in the moonlight, when I saw Muriel Ponderbury go through the gate of it just in front of me. I strolled after her to ask her the latest news of the hieroglyphics.

She passed out of sight around the corner of a shrubbery. As I came around it, I heard voices, and the sound of a kiss; and I came right on to her and Jack Thurman standing very close together. I was naturally shocked to find that people kissed one another in this exclusive garden; but I managed to say a few kind words about the moonlight and strolled on, trying to look as if I hadn't been shocked.

I had never guessed that Jack had a love affair. But I was pleased to see that he was not letting his barrister's briefness prevent him kissing a pretty girl because she was the daughter of a very rich man. It set me wishing that I had a love affair, myself; and somehow or other I found myself staring at Number Nine, where Amber Devine lived.

The house was lighted up; Scruton was evidently giving a party. Then I caught myself wishing that I went to his parties and met her. I pulled myself up very short; it would never do to get into the way of thinking about the ghost girl. I cleared out of the garden and the moonlight, off to one of my clubs, and played an honest game of bridge.

Next morning, Jack said to me:
 "I say, I'd rather you didn't tell any one you saw me with Miss Ponderbury last night."

"I shouldn't dream of it," I said.

"We're going to get married as soon as she's of age—in seven months. Her silly old dunderhead of a father is dead against it. He's made her promise not to write to me; and he employs the wife of that sponger, Manders, to see that she never speaks to me. We don't often get a chance to meet."

"I hope you make up for it when you do," I said.

"Oh, we try. But it's hard work waiting," he said.

"It must be," said I.

He said nothing for a minute or two; then he suggested:

"It's time you were getting married, yourself."

"I know it is. But I stave it off—I stave it off," I said, and I don't know why on earth I should have seen a sudden picture of Amber Devine's flushed face and shining eyes, just as I had seen them on Chipperfield Common.

Richards interrupted us to say that Sir Marmaduke Ponderbury wanted to see me particularly, and was waiting in the library. When I went into it, with my eyeglass in my eye and my mouth well open, he was standing before a window, bouncing gently.

He turned and squeaked very shrilly:

"Lord Garthoyle, I've come to make a last appeal to you, as one of my own order, to release me from my tenancy."

"What's happened, now?" I drawled.

He gave a pertinacious beggar.

"The result of my defying these miscreants by my advertisements is that yesterday there was a single hieroglyphic—the figure of a bomb. It is the last warning. They will act at once! Any minute! After a sleepless night, I have resolved to balk them by flight."

"Well, I don't object. I haven't got a bet with you about it, or I might call on you to stick it out," I said.

"But my rent—are you going to let me off the rest of my lease?" he squeaked.

"No; I'm not going to interfere with

your paying your rent. But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll lay you seven to four, now, that, whether you bolt or whether you don't, the flood of anarchy outs you."

He was looking rather green; he went greener. Then he bounced from side to side two or three times, and cried:

"It's incredible! Absolutely incredible! If the ordinary landlord had refused, I could have understood it. But that one of my own order should refuse, when I'm fighting for that order—it's incredible!"

"I'm not going to spoil sport, don't you know? Here are you and these anarchists having a little set-to, and I want to see the best man win. Come, will you take seven to four that they out you?"

"The sporting spirit is the curse of our order!" he howled. And out of the room and down the stairs he bounced.

Next morning I got a letter from him marked "Urgent." It ran:

The bomb has been drawn on the porch wall *again*, in spite of the fact that the police are watching the house. I fly this afternoon. Will you release me from my tenancy?
 M. P.

I wrote in the name of Garth & Thurman, saying that we could not see our way to letting him off his rent.

Later in the morning I strolled out into the garden of the triangle to see what the amateur detectives were doing. They were buzzing in a swarm in front of Sir Marmaduke's house, in the porch, on the pavement, in the roadway, and in the shrubbery of the central garden. About fourteen altercations were going on in a lively way; and I waited for a while in the hope of seeing a general scrap. But there was nothing but altercations; and, making up my mind that amateur detectives are noisy, but peaceful, I strolled on around the garden, to see how the gardeners were doing their work.

In the middle of the garden I suddenly came on the ghost girl; and my heart gave quite a jump. She was walking toward me, looking at the ground, her pretty forehead wrinkled with a frown, thinking hard. I thought for

half a second that I would bolt before she saw me; then I thought that I would do nothing of the kind. She looked up and saw me and flushed.

We shook hands, and she said:

"Have you, too, come into the garden to find out about the hieroglyphics?"

"I'm afraid my brains wouldn't run to it," I said.

It was plainly on the tip of her tongue to ask me what I was doing there, since only residents are allowed in the Gardens, and of course she no more knew that I lived in the Gardens than she knew my name, or that I was the man on whom she had played the ghost trick.

But she did not ask; she looked at me earnestly, and said:

"Oh, Mr. Garth, you helped me to take those poor children into the country when I had lost my purse. I wonder if you'd help me now?"

"Of course I will."

"I've found out the secret of the hieroglyphics; but I don't quite know what to do."

"The dickens you have!" I cried.

"Yes. I want that one hundred pounds reward awfully—for some more poor children I've made friends with. My stepfather said that it was quite plain that the hieroglyphics were drawn by some one who lived in Number Twelve. So I've been watching and watching the house with glasses. Yesterday I found out that it is the pretty girl—Miss Ponderbury, I think it is—who writes them; and she writes them for a dark young man, with a big, hooked nose, who lives at Number Eighteen."

Jack Thurman! That was his beak. It could be no one else's. And as I thought of Sir Marmaduke's terrors, and all the fuss in the papers, I burst out laughing. All that fuss about a lovers' signal code!

Miss Devine stared at me. Then she said:

"Yes, it is funny—all that fuss. But she did do it. There was nothing on the wall of the porch at six yesterday morning. At half past six she came out of the house, stopped just a few seconds in the porch, and walked across

into the garden. I slipped out at the far gate, came down past the house, ran up the steps, and saw the hieroglyphic on the wall."

"Excellent!" I said.

"I came back to the garden and went on watching. I saw a housemaid find the hieroglyphic, and I saw all the fuss that the servants and Sir Marmaduke Ponderbury and the police made when it was found. Sir Marmaduke talked very shrilly, and jumped up and down."

"He does bounce," I put in.

"And I saw Miss Ponderbury go back into the house soon after eight. Then, at ten minutes to nine, the young man with the big nose came by, ran up the steps, took one look at the hieroglyphic, and came down the steps, looking ever so pleased. I saw quite plainly from his face that he knew all about it, that it was drawn for him. I'm quite sure of it."

"So am I," I said. "You must claim the reward at once."

"That's just the difficulty. It's why I want your help, or rather your advice. Last night I saw Miss Ponderbury and the young man in the garden here, and they—and they—oh, well, they seemed very fond of one another. It would be a shame to get them into trouble. Yet I should like to get that one hundred pounds reward. What am I to do?"

"I see. You want that money; but you don't want the path of true love to run rough. Let's think," I said.

But I did not find it easy to think with her standing before me looking so charming with her frowning, puzzled face.

"I think I see a way," I said presently. "But old Ponderbury will be as mad as a hatter. He'll be the laughing-stock of England. It will knock his precious peerage on the head for good and all."

"His being angry is just what I'm afraid of," she said. "It's quite plain that he's already angry with them, or they wouldn't have to meet secretly. This will make him worse than ever."

"If you like to leave it with me, I think I can work it without harming

them; and I'll send Sir Marmaduke's check along to you, if I get it."

"It *would* be splendid if you could—a hundred pounds! But you mustn't make trouble for those two," she added.

"Oh, I won't do that! I wouldn't roughen the path of true love on any account. I might be there myself one of these days," I said.

"One never knows," she answered, smiling.

"And what have you been doing since the expedition? And how are your anarchists?" I asked.

She told me that she had given some teas in Hyde Park to two or three other lots of poor children, and that the anarchist family of Briggs was going very strong. She had been invited to join Charlotte Corday Briggs on a great shopping expedition; and, from Robespierre to Stepniak, the family was resplendent.

It was past one before we had finished our talk, and she hurried away to lunch. I walked across to Number Twelve, and was taken straight to Sir Marmaduke, in a small room at the back of the house—out of reach of the bombs. He was sitting in an armchair, looking as if he were out on a rough sea and it was not agreeing with him.

"Ah, at the last moment you have decided to stand by your order, and release me from my tenancy!" he exclaimed.

"No; I've come for the one hundred pounds reward," I said.

"You've found the miscreants? Then I can bring them to justice at once! I must act swiftly and terribly! The country will expect it of me! Their names?"

He was up and bouncing.

"Well, there's only one, and it's Miss Ponderbury," I drawled.

"Miss Ponderbury? My daughter?" he gasped.

"It seems you made her promise not to write to my friend, Jack Thurman, and these hieroglyphics are their signals."

"But this is monstrous!" he squeaked.

"It's very natural, don't you know?" I drawled.

"Incredible! Monstrous!" he squealed, bouncing. "My own daughter! I'll have no more to do with her! I'll send her away! She shall never enter this house again!"

He went on at a great length about the ungratefulness of tricking one's father; and I let him bounce and squeal.

Then I said:

"I should have thought you would have been glad to be rid of your fear of anarchists."

"When I think of what I have suffered, I could curse my daughter—curse her, Lord Garthoyle!" he squeaked.

"Yes. That's all right," I said. "But the worst thing is that your public work is spoiled for good and all."

"Why, how?" he squeaked.

"When it comes to be known that you've made all this fuss about some lovers' signals, you'll be the laughing-stock of the country; and no one will ever take you seriously again."

"I never thought of that," he gasped; and he collapsed into his armchair.

I lighted a cigarette, and let him think of it; then I said:

"You won't be able to do any public work at all, and you'll never get that peerage, unless you can hush it up."

"Yes, yes; you're right! I'll send my daughter away at once—to-night!" he cried.

"What good would that do? That wouldn't shut Jack Thurman's mouth. It would open it. You've got to shut it," I said.

"Curse that young man! Curse him!" he squeaked.

"Oh, yes! By all means. But he's got you in a cleft stick. You've got to let them get married."

"Never! Never! They shall never marry!" he squealed, bouncing up and down again.

I let him bounce till he was tired, then I said:

"It seems rather silly to become the laughing-stock of the country and lose a peerage for a fad like this. Really, Jack Thurman has done you a service. He's brought your name before the public as no work of your own ever did.

He's really got you a peerage, if you sit tight and take it. But you know best. I'll let the papers know about this discovery at once, myself."

I rose, and was opening the door, when he cried:

"Wait! Wait! I must think about it! Don't be so hasty!"

He flung himself back in the arm-chair, pouting, with his eyes full of tears; and I expected him to start blubbing.

At last, he said, very sulkily:

"I yield. They shall marry. I do not yield out of fear of ridicule. I do not abandon my just resentment. The good of my country demands my surrender, the surrender of my private feelings; I cannot let myself be paralyzed in my work for its best interests. They *shall* marry!" he squeaked solemnly.

"That's all right," I said. "And now we'll draw up the contract."

He kicked at this; but what I felt was that it was no use my being a house agent if I did not draw up contracts. Besides, he seemed to me too peevish to trust. I just bullied him into it.

I drew up the contract myself. He gave his consent to Miss Ponderbury's marrying Jack in three months' time. He settled seven hundred a year on her. I tried to make it a thousand, but I found that that was trying him too high and might upset the whole business. When he had signed the contract, he wrote a check for the one hundred pounds reward for Amber Devine.

After it, he was better. He bounced beside me to the front door, and, as I went down the steps, he said:

"It is a relief to once more take up the work of strengthening our order with an unharassed mind."

When I got home, I sent the check around to Amber Devine, and went into my office. Jack had just come back after his lunch.

"I've just drawn up a contract, and I should like you to look through it," I said. "I think it's all right." And I gave it to him.

He could not believe his eyes.

"What? Where? How? How on

earth did you get this out of the old dunderhead?" he stammered.

"Gently with your future father-in-law," I said; and I told him the line I had taken.

When I had stopped his thanks, I pulled out my drawing of the hieroglyphics, and asked him what they meant exactly.

"That showed me where Muriel would be on the fourth day after it was drawn," he said. "The four shows the fourth day, the circle with the line drawn through it at the bottom of it is the afternoon sun; if the line were drawn through the top, it would be the morning sun. The ducal coronet——"

"You call that a coronet? Ponderbury called it an infernal machine."

"It's a coronet—a ducal coronet. It meant that Muriel would be at the Duchess of Huddersfield's in the afternoon. The circle with the cross means the night—the crossed-out sun. The square with the three in it is Three, Berkeley Square. That's where she'd be that night."

"I see," I said. "And what does the bomb, the crossed-out sun—the last hieroglyphic you drew—mean when it's by itself?"

"Oh, that meant that her duenna, Mrs. Manders, would be out, and that she'd come to the garden that night. It's quite simple."

It was.

CHAPTER V.

The discovery that he had made such a complete fool of himself seemed to have a chastening effect on Sir Marmaduke. Jack told me that now, when he went to the house to see Muriel, the gutta-percha one was quite civil to him. Also, he seemed to have grown rather shy of me since I had drawn up that marriage contract, for he ceased pestering Garth & Thurman with his fussy letters.

The Gardens, indeed, were going very nicely and quietly. It is a great advantage that the rents of the houses are two thousand pounds a year, not only from the point of view of my income, but also because it means that my ten-

ants are desirable. Bad hats and swindlers do not run to such high rents.

Indeed, the only tenant about whom I was doubtful was Scruton. Ever since the good gum millionaire had tried to get his house rent free by that ingenious ghost trick, I had been expecting more games from him. He really was a millionaire, or thereabouts. I had had inquiries made about him, and Jack had thought it well to have the share register at Somerset House looked up, and had found that Scruton was a large shareholder in Australian and New Zealand securities. Still, I knew that he was a crooked millionaire, and I could not help expecting that he would turn out to be an undesirable tenant. I myself much prefer the millionaire who has inherited his millions to the millionaire who has made them. He is straighter.

Oddly enough, it was that rising young politician, my cousin, Herbert Polkington, who brought to my knowledge the unpleasant fact that Scruton was on the way to get Number Nine the reputation of a gambling hell.

Herbert is one of those earnest and serious politicians who get up on their hind legs and paw the air when you tell them that politics is only a game, and not as cheery a game as racing. So, when he turned up one day, and said that he had come to lunch with me, I was rather surprised. He is always very lofty with me, because of what he calls my "useless life," and this was condescending, indeed. I wondered what he wanted.

It was a stifling hot day, but Herbert was the correct politician, in black top hat, black morning coat, dark trousers, dark tie, and dark gloves. It made me feel hot to look at him.

"Do you never wear summer clothes—something gray?" I asked him over our melons.

"Never in London. Gray clothes give a man an air of frivolity; they do not go with serious aims in life. In the country, I wear tweeds, of course, but always dark shades. My reputation demands it," he said solemnly.

"I shouldn't like to have a reputation like that," I said.

"I fear you never will. It is unfortunately too late," he replied very loftily.

"Saved! Saved!" I murmured softly.

He looked pained, but did not rebuke me; so I knew for certain that he did want something.

I seemed to have set him going, for he talked earnestly about the dress and the habits and the customs of the correct young politician. I let him drone on. It is never any use trying to quicken him; he will take the most round-about way to come to what he wants. I dare say he thinks it diplomatic.

Then he did give me a jolt. He got away from the perfect young politician, and began to talk about the perfect young politician's wife; and he said that the important thing was that she should have brains.

I looked at the bottle of champagne. It was not that; he had not drunk enough.

Then I said:

"Rot, old chap! The important thing is that she should be related to the right kind of people, and know how to entertain them in the right kind of way; or else she must be a woman with a lot of money."

"No," he said solemnly. "What a man—a man dealing with imperial affairs—needs in a wife is a stimulating companion, some one to foster the efforts of his genius."

I looked again at the bottle of champagne. It was *not* the quantity; he had had only a couple of glasses of it. It must be stronger than I had thought. Then I said:

"This is what they call poppycock in the States. If we were out of doors, I should say that you were talking through your hat."

"I am quite serious. These are the conclusions I have come to after giving the matter my most careful consideration," said Herbert solemnly; and he raised his glass and looked at it as if he were perfectly satisfied with it, himself, and everything else in the nice, round world.

I was not going to bother with rot like this.

"All right; it doesn't matter," I said. "At any rate, you're fixed up properly. You're going to marry Anne Dressington; and she is related to the whole gang of the right people, knows exactly what they want, and has five thousand a year."

It has been understood in the family for a long while that Herbert is going to marry our cousin, Lady Dressington; and it is one of those comfortable arrangements that are good for every one.

Herbert emptied his wineglass quickly; and his round, yellow face turned a little pink.

"Not at all; not at all," he said quickly. "Neither Anne nor I have considered that seriously. But it was about a matter of that kind that I came to consult you. In spite of the frivolous life you lead, you have a certain amount of common sense."

"Flatterer!" said I.

"Besides, in matters of this kind you have had a good deal of experience."

"What kind of matter?" said I.

"Women. You know all about them."

"You don't know *anything* about them, or you wouldn't say anything so silly," I said firmly.

"Oh, yes, you do!" he said obstinately. "Look at all the messes you've been in!"

"Messes? What a way to speak of grand passions! But, never mind. What is it you want to know?"

"Well, I'm very much interested in a lady—a very pretty girl," he began hesitatingly. "I met her at the house of one of your tenants—at Scruton's, the millionaire at Number Nine—a very able man."

"Very able," I said. "And I thought of how the old sweep had tricked my uncle out of a quarter's rent by his ghost, and very nearly tricked me. Then my heart gave a little jump and I felt annoyed; Herbert must have been making love to the ghost girl herself. I had no reason to feel annoyed, of course. It had nothing to do with me. Whatever a girl who had lent herself to such

a shady trick as that might do, it could not possibly matter to me. Still, Herbert! Herbert is such a rotter!

"But I'm rather uneasy about the circumstances; the—er—environment," he went on. "Two or three times a week, Scruton has a party after the theater—a man's party. They play bacarat, and they play very high. I was taken to one of these parties, and I met her there. And I have been again—several times. And the play is always very high. I—I have found the atmosphere of the house suspicious."

Here it was, as large as life. I had been expecting some little game from Scruton; and here it was.

"Look here! Do you mean to tell me that that infernal New Zealander is running a gambling hell in Garthoyle Gardens?" I asked.

"No, no! I don't say that. I've no right to. My suspicions are quite vague—hardly suspicions. Besides, a millionaire wouldn't run a gambling hell, would he?" he said quickly.

"You know very well a millionaire would. It's just the profitable amusement a millionaire would love. You know the sweeps. How much have you lost?"

"About three hundred. But of course I don't mind that."

"Of course you don't! You go to see the girl, and that is the price you pay for it. I should never have accused you of being young, but you're a deal younger than I ever dreamed."

"You've no right to jump to conclusions in such a hurry, I tell you. It may be all my fancy."

"Fancy or not, I can give you the advice you want at once," I said. "You keep away from Number Nine, or you'll get into a most unholy mess; and England will lose a choice prime minister."

"No, no! That isn't it, at all. It isn't your advice I want. I want the benefit of your experience. I want you to come to one of Scruton's parties, so that you may see for yourself and tell me if there is anything wrong. There's no need for an invitation. I can take you without."

"No, thank you," I said. "Outside is good enough for me."

I did not want to see any more of the ghost girl. I had a feeling that that way lay trouble. Besides, it would be rather awkward; she knew me under the name of Garth; and she might be annoyed to find that I had not told her my right name when we talked about the Ponderbury hieroglyphics.

But Herbert would not take a refusal. He went on pestering and pestering me to give him the benefit of my experience, and declaring and declaring that I could not do it properly till I had looked into the matter for myself. Also, I felt that I ought to prevent his getting into a hole, if I could—after all, though it is not my fault, he is my cousin—and in the end I gave way. He arranged to call for me at eleven the next Thursday night.

After he had gone, I grew even more annoyed about the business; and yet it really did not matter to me whether the ghost girl married Herbert or not.

When he called for me, I was ready for him, with two hundred in fivers in my pocket. I did not mean to plunge. We strolled around to Number Nine, and were taken up to a room on the first floor. A long table, covered with a green cloth, was set under two of the windows, and a dozen men were playing at it. Scruton, as black-faced and hard-bitten as ever, stood on the hearth-rug talking to a man whom I did not know. Three or four men were clustered around two girls who were sitting on a couch on the left-hand side of the room. One of the girls was Amber Devine; and at the sight of me her eyes opened wide, and she flushed.

Scruton did not show the slightest embarrassment at the sight of me. He greeted me easily, and said that he was very glad I had come round for a game. It was clear that, to him, his little attempt to trick me out of his rent was neither here nor there—just a sort of diversion.

The panting Herbert drew me across the room to the couch on which the two girls were sitting. I shook hands with Amber quickly, before he could introduce me as Garthoyle. Then I greeted three of the men in the group around

the girls heartily, stretching the greetings out, for I knew that all of them would call me Garth.

It was no use; Herbert would not have it. He seized me by the arm, turned me around, and bawled:

"Let me introduce you to Miss Maynard. Lord Garthoyle—Miss Maynard."

I did not miss the ghost girl's little start when she heard my real name; and out of the corner of my eye I saw a little frown on her forehead as she stared at me.

I looked as innocent as I could, and began to talk to Miss Maynard quickly. In two minutes I found that she was all right to talk to; very bright and quick, and ready to laugh. She was a pretty girl, too, with very fine, dark eyes, and dark hair, and a very clear skin with plenty of color in it. I fancied, too, that she had one of those hot tempers that flare up quickly on occasion, but that she would not sulk.

In five minutes we were quite friendly; and, when the other men moved to the baccarat table, I stayed on, talking to her, leaving Herbert to the ghost girl.

They did not seem to be getting on very fast, and finally he said in a disagreeable tone:

"Wouldn't you like to go and play baccarat, Garthoyle?"

I tumbled to it at once. It was not the ghost girl who had captured Herbert's wayward heart; it was Miss Maynard. I felt ridiculously pleased. Yet what on earth did it matter to me?

"Conversation before cards for me, Herbert," I said coldly, and I went on talking to Miss Maynard.

She seemed all right; she looked a nice girl, and she talked like a nice girl. But you never can tell; and the direttore frocks of the two girls were about as direct as they make them. I was really annoyed by the one the ghost girl was wearing.

I went on talking till I felt that Herbert was champing the bit badly. When I grew afraid that at any moment he might snort, I said:

"Well, I'll go and flutter for a while."

I sat down on the farther side of the table, so that I could watch Herbert and Miss Maynard; and, as I played, I began to size up the gathering. It seemed harmless enough. Morrisdale was banker—a fifty-pound bank; men were staking fivers and tenners. I knew most of the men playing; half a dozen of them were serious gamblers, the others were young ones on the racket. I did not think that the game would stay as gentle as this all the evening. As I played, I watched the ghost girl and Miss Maynard. I did wish that those directoire frocks were not so con-foundedly direct.

Miss Maynard was talking away to the solemn Herbert; but presently I grasped the fact that she kept looking toward the door. Three more men came in—one of them that hulking brute, Sir Theobald Walsh—and came over to the table. Miss Maynard still looked at the door. Then in came Freddy Gage, Herbert's private secretary. I saw the look he and Miss Maynard exchanged; and I knew whom she had been looking for.

Freddy had been one of my fags at Eton, and I had always liked him. I have always believed that he writes Herbert's speeches and articles for him. To speak roughly, he has four times as many brains in his little finger as Herbert has in his capacious bullethead.

He joined Herbert and the two girls, and I went on with my game, considering things.

It was all very well; but, however much she might look for his coming, I did not think that when it came to serious business Freddy, with his brains and his five hundred a year, besides his salary, stood much chance against Herbert, with his seven thousand.

Several times I caught the ghost girl's eye; she was looking at me in a puzzled kind of way. Evidently, she had not yet grown used to my not being a simple commoner; she was rearranging her ideas.

Then Otto Steiner and a piebald duke went to the couch and began to talk to the ghost girl. Whereupon, Freddy Gage seemed to do a little readjusting, for in about two minutes he carried off

Miss Maynard through the window to the balcony, while Herbert came across to the table, looking rather puzzled, and began to play.

The piebald duke went on talking to the ghost girl, but his eyes kept straying to the table, and finally he came over to it. At once Walsh rose, went to the ghost girl, pulled a chair up to the couch, and, leaning over her in a proprietary sort of way, began to talk in her ear. I was annoyed. Walsh is not the kind of man whom one likes to see within a quarter of a mile of a decent girl.

Steiner took the bank, and made it a three-hundred bank. Miss Maynard and Freddy Gage came back into the room, looking very well pleased with themselves, and, coming to the table, watched the play. It was higher; men were betting twenties and fifties. Then I saw that the ghost girl was sitting up very stiffly and frowning, and that her eyes were sparkling angrily. Walsh was smiling in an ugly way.

I got up and went across to them.

"You look as if you found the heat of the room rather trying, Miss Devine. Won't you come out on the balcony and get a breath of fresh air?" I asked.

Walsh scowled at me, and said something about her being very well where she was.

She rose quickly, and answered:

"Oh, yes; I should like to!"

"Disagreeable brute, Walsh," I said, when we had settled down into two easy-chairs among the plants.

She hesitated.

"I—I don't like him. I'm very glad you took me away from him."

"Go on disliking him—hard," I said. "You know what these baronets are. They shouldn't be encouraged. Whenever you come across a baronet, sit on him."

She laughed softly; then she said:

"That's all very well; but if they won't be sat on?"

"Walsh is a pertinacious beggar," I said. "But keep on sitting on him, and in time he'll understand what's happening."

"I do what I can," she said. "But he doesn't seem to understand yet."

"Never mind; keep on. It's the only way."

She leaned back in her chair, and looked out across the garden. Then she looked at me, and asked rather quickly:

"Why did you give me a false name? It wasn't fair."

"Oh, all my friends call me Garth, don't you know? And it might have made those children uncomfortable to know that they were with a lord. I've known it work that way with people—goodness knows why! Besides, peers have such a bad name. You might have got straight out of the car and run for your life if you had known that I was a peer."

"Are you ever at a loss for an excuse?" she said, smiling.

"No—now you come to speak of it—I don't think I ever am. But these aren't excuses; they're good, solid reasons."

"Still, you might have told me when we were talking about those hieroglyphics."

"Yes; of course I might. But why should I? Besides, it was a bit difficult. I couldn't say: 'By the way, my real name is Lord Garthoyle,' could I?"

"Perhaps not," she conceded. "But I do like everything aboveboard."

I could not see exactly how that liking went with the ghost trick. But there! Women are like that; they must humbug.

"I haven't thanked you for getting that check for me," she went on. "I'm awfully obliged to you."

"There's no need to be. You could have got it yourself. I was very glad to save you a little trouble."

"Oh, I should have made a dreadful mess of things!"

"Roughened the path of true love? I don't think you would. Have you spent it all?"

"Indeed, no; it will last ever such a long time. Why, there are more than a hundred treats—expeditions to Kew or to the country—in that money. I'm

keeping it for that. It's splendid to have a lot of money like that."

It was an odd way for the stepdaughter of a millionaire to talk, especially since she was living with him. But I was not surprised by it. Except when they are showing off, millionaires are stingy sweeps; and I did not suppose that Scruton was any exception to the rule.

I bethought myself that I was there on Herbert's business; and I set her talking about Miss Maynard. She did not want any encouragement.

"Oh, Kitty's a darling!" she said. "I don't know what I should do without Kitty."

And she plunged into praises of her friend.

I learned that Miss Maynard's mother was a widow, and that they were very hard up; that Miss Maynard was very keen on amusing herself, and always came to Scruton's parties. He had told Amber that she should invite her to help her entertain his guests. Of course, there was no need of a hostess at such parties; and it was clearer than ever that the two girls were used as decoys. It was no business of mine, but it vexed me. However, I said nothing about it; I let the ghost girl go on talking.

I gathered that though Miss Maynard was a nice enough girl, and uncommonly clever, she was a bit wild, and dead set on having a good time. I could not see her the wife of a serious, not to say dull, politician like Herbert. It would work well enough perhaps if Herbert were merely a fool; but he is such an obstinate fool. A mild brand of wife who liked being bullied, like Anne Dressington, was what he wanted. He was just the kind of man to come badly to grief with a clever, wild one like Miss Maynard. Herbert was in a hole.

The ghost girl presently stopped talking about Kitty Maynard, and I said:

"You say that Miss Maynard is hard up, but that dress she's wearing doesn't look like hard-upness."

Amber looked at me rather hard, and she flushed.

"Oh, these dresses," she said slowly, in a distressed voice. "It's my stepfather. He arranges about our dresses—not only mine, but Kitty's, too. He says it's only fair that, since she helps me act as hostess, he should provide the properties. And—and he will have them like this. I—I—hate them!"

"They're very nice dresses," I said cheerfully. "What's the matter with them?"

"Oh, you know quite well what's the matter with them!" she flashed out, with a sudden burst of temper. Then she gave a little gasp, and added: "But—but why am I talking to you like this? I—I scarcely know you."

"Oh, yes, you do. You know all there is to know. And why shouldn't you talk openly to me? I'm quite safe. And I like it. It's a great compliment."

"I dare say it is. But——"

She stopped short and rose, and we went back into the room.

Two or three men were talking to Kitty Maynard, and Amber went back to the couch. I saw that for the moment she had had enough of me, and I went back to the table and played. As I played, I wondered about her; *baccarat* is a nice, easy game to play—it gives you plenty of time to think. She did seem contradictory; somehow, that ghost trick did not fit in with the rest of her. Once or twice I caught her glowering at me as if she were still angry with me because she had told me her feelings about that *directoire* frock. It was awfully like a woman to blame me for what she herself had said.

The play was serious, now—a thousand-pound bank. As I punted, I watched very carefully; but I saw nothing wrong. Indeed, with such seasoned gamblers as Tony le Quesne, Steiner, and two or three of the other men who were playing at the table, it would have been difficult for there to be anything wrong. I watched *Scruton* with particular care when he took the bank. He seemed far too clumsy a dealer to play any tricks with the cards. Besides, he lost about seven hundred over his bank.

Men kept dropping out and talking to the girls for a while and coming back

again. They talked to them with too easy an air to please me. But it was no business of mine.

I dropped out, myself, and had another talk with Miss Maynard; and it made me surer than ever that she would never do for Herbert. Soon after two, the two girls slipped away; and then Herbert went, and then Gage, and Walsh, and two or three others. I took it that these came chiefly on account of the two girls, and I was annoyed to see that Walsh was one of them. The rest of us broke up at about a quarter past four.

I walked home rather slowly. One way and another I had plenty to think of. Well, I had had a pleasant evening.

CHAPTER VI.

I was finishing my breakfast, rather late, next morning, when Richards ushered in Herbert. I told Richards to pour him out a cup of coffee, and then to leave us.

"Well, what do you think about Miss Maynard?" said Herbert, when we were alone.

"I think, my good chap, that outside is good enough for you," said I.

"Nonsense! Why?" asked Herbert. "She's a thoroughly nice girl, and very clever."

"She's clever, and pretty, and nice. But, all the same, it won't do. You can't marry a girl who is acting as decoy at the gambling parties of a nondescript millionaire."

"She isn't!" said Herbert.

"I don't think she knows she is, any more than Miss Devine does. But that's what they are doing, all the time."

"But it's absurd!" cried Herbert. "*Scruton's* is not a gambling hell; the play's perfectly fair there. I asked *Le Quesne*, and I asked the duke. They were both sure that it was."

"Were they?" I said. "What does that matter? The play is quite fair at *Monte Carlo*. Every one will be saying that Miss Maynard was a decoy at a gambling hell if you bring her into prominence by marrying her. And you

will bring her into prominence. You're so eligible."

"Well—well—they'll say something just as bad about any one I marry."

"Not about Anne."

"I wish you'd get that silly idea out of your head. I'm not going to marry Anne," said Herbert pettishly.

I was sure that he was; but it was no use telling him so.

"It isn't that, but Miss Maynard wouldn't make the kind of wife you want. She's had a poor time; and, if she marries a rich man, she'll make up for it—hard. She'll set up the backs of all your political crowd; and she'll never take the trouble to learn the political game—the drawing-room part of it. She won't be bothered with it."

"You're wrong—quite wrong. I know that Kitty is fond of pleasure. She admits it—frankly. But she has a plastic nature. I should mold her."

I looked at Herbert hard. The idiot who could say that about Miss Maynard was worth looking at.

"You couldn't mold her in a hundred years—not with a club," I said slowly. "If there's any molding done, she'll do it. Within six months of your marriage, she'll have you a regular attendant at every big race meeting in England."

"Preposterous!" said Herbert.

"I'll bet you a tenner," said I.

"You know I never bet," said Herbert.

"No, you don't; and yet you propose to marry Miss Maynard."

"I don't see the connection," said Herbert stiffly.

"Which shows that you have no business to be marrying Miss Maynard."

"But I do see that I was foolish to consult you. The fact is, Rupert, you are so incorrigibly frivolous yourself that you are incredulous of the possibility of seriousness in any one else," he said pompously.

"It isn't that, at all," I said. "But there are some brands of seriousness that won't mix. Yours is one of them."

Herbert rose solemnly.

"I see that I was foolish to consult you," he said. "I had my doubts, grave

doubts, of the wisdom of it. Good morning." And he stalked toward the door.

"Good morning," I said. "But don't forget that I've told you."

He went out solemnly.

I had done no good; but that did not trouble me. I had not expected to do any good. The important thing was that I had told Herbert the facts, and my mind was quite at ease.

I went around to Scruton's next party—he gave them twice a week—for I felt that, as the head of the family, I ought to keep an eye on Herbert's love affair; and, besides, I wanted to know if the ghost girl had forgiven me for her having been so open with me.

I talked to her two or three times in the intervals of playing; but she would not come on the balcony again. Perhaps she felt that it led to confidences. I talked to her about Kitty Maynard, of course, for I wanted to know as much as possible about her; and once more she said what a pity it was that the Maynards were so hard up.

"Well, Miss Maynard must marry a rich man," I said.

"She says she means to. But I do hope she won't. It isn't right to marry a man—you don't love."

"It's often done," I said. "And Freddy Gage would be awfully cut up."

"You've noticed that? You are quick!"

"It's pretty obvious."

"It would be so much the best thing to do. He's very nice. But I'm afraid he hasn't enough money," she added, with a sigh.

Some one joined us, and I got no more talk with her that night.

After that I fell into the way of going to Scruton's parties regularly. I had to keep an eye on Herbert. His love affair was progressing in a very satisfactory way, for him; and he was wearing his most important air. Freddy Gage was the only man who gave him any trouble. It lay between them, plainly enough. The more I saw of Miss Maynard, the less reason I found to change my belief that Herbert would come the complete cropper.

One night he and I came away together.

"I have quite satisfied myself that you were entirely wrong about Miss Maynard," he said pompously. "She has a thoroughly adaptable nature. At heart, she is a very serious girl."

"We'll talk about that later," I said. "When you have been married six months."

"But I must get rid of Gage," he went on, without taking any notice of my kind words. "He encourages her in her frivolity. The worst of it is that if I do, he'll go to Ambleton. Ambleton has been trying to get him from me for the last six months."

"Very good man, Freddy Gage," I said.

And we went our different ways.

Three days later, I received a note from Herbert, telling me that he was engaged to Miss Maynard, and that their engagement would be publicly announced in about a fortnight, when he had broken in his people to the idea.

I did not write to congratulate him. I was silent, as a disapproving head of the family ought to be. He should never say that he had had any encouragement from me.

At Scruton's next party I again found Kitty Maynard; and I was a good deal surprised. I had taken it for granted that that would be the first thing Herbert would stop. It looked as if she had already begun refusing to be molded. She was rather nervous, and she looked worried. Freddy Gage looked worried, too; and Herbert was not beaming. I talked to Kitty Maynard a while; I played baccarat; and then I got Amber to come out on the balcony to get away from Sir Theobald Walsh.

For a while we talked about nothing at all pleasantly. Then I said:

"My cousin and Miss Maynard don't look as if they were enjoying being engaged. What's the matter?"

"You do ask straightforward questions!"

"Well, I must do my best to smooth the path of true love."

"True love," repeated the ghost girl

softly. "Yes, one would have to do that. But—but— Oh, well, Kitty isn't happy. I think your cousin wearies her a little."

"Herbert would weary a turbine if he got a fair chance at it."

"And he's rather exacting. He forbade her to come here. But she would. She said she wasn't going to desert me; and he was angry."

"Herbert is a fool; but she must know that. She's really worried about Freddy Gage, I suppose."

"I've no right to talk about it," she said quickly.

"No more have I; but we mustn't let that prevent us. It's a case of three in a hole. Now, if I were to haul Herbert out by the scruff of the neck, the other two would be happy enough. I should like to do a little rescue work."

"If you only could! But you can't! Your cousin is very obstinate. It—it distresses me to think of their marriage. I can see only unhappiness for Kitty—for both of them—in it."

"That's all there is to see."

"Oh, why doesn't he carry her off by force and marry her?" she cried.

"Herbert's other name is not Lochinvar. Besides, she wouldn't let him."

"I mean Mr. Gage; not Mr. Polkington."

"Oh! She'd let *him*, would she?" I asked.

"I oughtn't to have let you know," she said quickly.

But she had let me know; and it set me thinking; in fact, it gave me an idea.

At Scruton's next two parties matters did not seem to be going any better. I saw from Herbert's sulky face that the molding process was not working well, but he was very snappish when I told him how it struck me. On the fourth evening before the announcement of the engagement, I came on Freddy and Miss Maynard in the central garden, though neither of them had any right to be in it, since they did not belong to the families of any of my tenants. They seemed to be quarreling, and not enjoying the quarrel. She went

off to see the ghost girl, and I insisted that Freddy should dine with me.

He was very like a funeral, and the champagne was some time in ironing the frown out of his boyish brow. When he began to look more cheerful, I said: "I think it's a jolly shame your letting that poor girl come to grief by marrying that prig, Herbert."

His face went crimson, and I thought that he would throw his plate at me.

"Damn it all, Garthoyle! I've enough to worry me, without you starting to nag at me!" he growled.

"Well, why don't you stop it?" I persisted.

"Stop it! How can I stop it? Haven't I tried to stop it? Haven't I told her forty times what an aggravating rotter Polkington is? Haven't I argued with her, and begged and begged her not to ruin her life by marrying him? Don't I know him? Haven't I had two years of him?"

"You have," said I.

"She *couldn't* stand him; she's not that kind of girl."

"She isn't," said I.

"But she's made up her mind to marry a rich man, and nothing will stop her. She's sick to death of being hard up. It's hopeless."

"It may be. But you've *got* to stop it. You must be firm," I said.

If I had been within reach, I think that he would have bitten a piece out of me.

"Firm!" he howled. "Firm!"

"Firm," said I.

He choked a little, and called me a damned, interfering idiot.

He seemed nicely wound up, so I said:

"Look here! Did you ever hear of young Lochinvar? And have you ever thought what motor cars are really for? And what about special marriage licenses?"

He cooled uncommonly quickly, drank off his glass of champagne, and exclaimed softly:

"By Jove!"

"Now, we know that motor cars are always appearing in the divorce court. But no one ever uses them *pour le bon*

motif—when their intentions are honorable. Is it fair on the motor car, I ask you?" said I.

"Fire away," said Freddy.

I told him of my plan for rescuing Herbert, and he was quick tumbling to it.

When I had told him all the details, he said:

"The awkward thing is that I can't drive a car."

"You politicians!" I derided. "But I'm not going to do the thing by half. Herbert must be rescued. I'll drive the car myself."

"By Jove, if you would!" he cried. "But are you sure you can stick it out? There'll be an awful fuss. You won't soften?"

"Not a soften," I promised.

He had grown quite cheerful by the time we had worked out all the arrangements; and, when he went away, I had almost to throw him out of the house to stop his thanks.

Two days later, I picked up Miss Maynard and Freddy at her mother's flat in West Kensington. She was looking delightfully pretty; there was not a shadow of a cloud on her face, and I saw that she had made up her mind to enjoy the afternoon. I rather envied Freddy.

She proposed, politely, to sit by me, but I put the two of them into the tonneau. It was a glorious day, and, once out of London, I enjoyed the drive. I felt that I was performing a noble action. Most of the time I drove slowly; but once, when a road hog came scorching along, I gave him my dust for eight miles. All the while I heard a gentle murmur of talk from the tonneau, and sometimes a soft laugh. They were not talking about Herbert.

We had tea at the White Hart at Lewes. We talked for some time after it. I left them to get the car, and I was some time over that. It was past six when I brought it around to the front door of the hotel.

As she got into the car, Kitty Maynard said anxiously:

"I'm afraid we shall have to hurry back, Lord Garthoyle. Mr. Polkington

is calling for me at half past nine to take me to a dance at the Cheshams. Do you think we shall do it?"

"The car can do it," I assured her.

It could.

I ran up to Three Bridges, and down to Horsham. It is at the top of the triangle of which a line drawn between Guildford and Dorking would be the base. Garth Royal, my country house, lies in the middle of it. I set out to drive around that triangle.

The talk in the tonneau was rather fitful. There were long silences. Once I heard Kitty Maynard say:

"No, no, no, Freddy! It's too late!"

By eight o'clock I had driven around the triangle, and was back at Horsham. Freddy seemed to see the danger, for I heard the talk brisk up.

I thought I was going to get safely through the town, when Kitty Maynard gave a little cry, and said:

"Why—why—we were here hours ago! We must have lost our way! We shall be ever so late getting to London. Herbert will be perfectly horrible."

"We're not going back to London," announced Freddy.

I let the car go. The middle of a town of nine thousand inhabitants is not the place for delicate explanation. Besides, I did not want to overhear the discussion; I thought that they would prefer it private. As it was, I caught scraps of it, of Kitty Maynard's side of it. She was plainly enough in a royal rage.

I had got about eight miles beyond Horsham when Freddy called to me to stop. We were in a nice empty part of the country, a long way from anywhere—so far as walking went. So I stopped.

Kitty leaned over the front of the tonneau, and said:

"Please drive me back to London at once, Lord Garthoyle."

She was still in a rage; her cheeks were white, and her eyes were fairly flaming.

"It can't be done. I'm a brutal bad brigand at five stone seven to-night. It's my first attempt at a kidnaping job,

and I'm going through with it like a man," I said cheerfully.

"It's hateful! It's disgraceful! It's incredible! You can't really suppose that you can force me to do this ridiculous thing!" she cried.

"I don't see anything ridiculous in it. I should think you'd find it rather nice," I replied.

"You won't?" She turned to Freddy. "Make him, Freddy! Make him at once! Or I'll never—never—forgive you!"

"I can't make him—hulking brute!—and I wouldn't if I could," said Freddy cheerfully. And I gathered that he was hopeful.

"But—but what will people say? I shall be compromised—hopelessly compromised!"

"Not if you marry me," said Freddy.

"I won't marry you!"

"We're keeping that parson waiting," said Freddy.

"I'll never marry you!" she repeated, and jumped out of the car.

She set out walking quickly to Horsham.

"It's all right," said Freddy calmly. "She'll be better presently—like a lamb. There's always a reaction after these rages. It's only a matter of keeping one's temper with her."

He set out after her, caught her up, and walked beside her. I could see that he was talking hard. I let them get a couple of hundred yards down the road before I set the car crawling after them. I wondered how far she would walk before she gave in. Two or three times Freddy put his arm round her, and she shook herself out of it. Then, at the end of the mile, they stopped. I stopped, too, for I thought that they were at the final row that would clear things up.

Then Freddy beckoned to me, and I ran up to them.

"Now, on your honor, Lord Garthoyle, what time does the last train leave Horsham?" she asked. And I saw that she looked pale and uncertain.

"On my honor, it leaves at nine-eighteen," I said.

"Then it is hopeless! And I'll never forgive Freddy—never!"

"That's all right. I've treated you shamefully, and we'll let it go at that," said Freddy cheerfully. "Now we'll go and get married."

He half lifted her into the car, and I let it rip. I did not hear any talk from the tonneau. I took it that they were whispering.

It was ten minutes past nine when I stopped at the door of Garth Royal rectory. I had fixed the time within ten minutes. The rector stood on the steps, looking out for us.

Kitty and Freddy got out of the car, looking as if they did not know whether they were standing on their heads or their heels. She was not at all pale—she was blushing; and her eyes were shining, but not with anger.

I had made all the arrangements with the rector. He had only to look at the special license and see that it was all right. He married them in his own drawing-room, his wife and daughters standing by Kitty and making the required fuss. Kitty looked quite resigned.

Then Kitty wrote a short letter for me to take to her mother, and I gave her my peace offering in the shape of a rope of pearls.

They thanked the rector, and came back to the car, and I drove them to the dower house. I could not lend them Garth Royal itself, for I had let it to a Hamburg money lender. But the dower house was lighted up, and looked very nice and comfortable; and I knew that their wedding supper was all right, for I had arranged it with Harrod's myself, and had sent down Richards to see to it.

They got out of the car, and the door opened, and Richards came out to receive them. In the blaze of light, I saw that Kitty was looking very pretty.

They turned; but I did not give them time to begin thanking me. I called out good night and good luck, and bucketed off. I did bucket. It was only half past eleven when I sneaked softly up the stairs, slipped Kitty's note into the letter

box of her mother's flat, and bolted down to the car.

I was in the middle of my supper when Herbert rushed into my dining room. I have never seen him such a rich purple since.

"The little jade has jilted me! She's married Freddy Gage!" he roared.

I jumped up and caught his hand, gave it the heartiest grip I could get out of my muscles, and shouted:

"Saved! Saved!"

"You silly idiot!" howled Herbert. And he danced out of the room, waggling his crushed fingers.

From Herbert's point of view, I dare say that there was something in what he said. All the same, I *had* rescued him.

CHAPTER VII.

Now and then fresh evidence turned up that Scruton was really a millionaire; and the clearer that grew, the more difficult it was to understand why he had tricked my uncle, and tried to trick me, into letting him have his house rent free by setting Amber to play that ghost trick on us. I might have thought that it was his idea of a joke if he had ever shown any other signs of a humorous disposition; but he did not. I never came across anybody more serious.

I had quite made up my mind that his baccarat parties were on the square. Too many of the keenest gamblers in London, men who could not be cheated for any length of time, played at them regularly week after week. I could not understand, however, why he gave these parties so often, for, though he played most of the time himself, he did not seem at all a keen gambler; and not once did I see him plunge heavily. Again, he did not use the parties as a means of rising in the social scale. He seemed to have no ambition that way. I came to the conclusion that my idea that it was his hobby to have the severest gambling in London at his house was the right one. I always noticed that he kept a close eye on our winnings and losings; and at the end of each party he would rub his hands together and announce gleefully that twenty-five

or thirty thousand pounds had changed hands in the course of the evening; and he always added:

"Fine gambling! First-class gambling! Eh, what?"

But it did seem to me a trifle thick that he should use Amber as an attraction to bring men to his parties if they were merely his hobby. It would have been more excusable if he had been playing some shady game with them. But there! Millionaires are queer fish.

I went to most of his parties; and every time I went I was annoyed afresh to find Amber being used as a decoy. It was really no business of mine, except that she and I were growing more and more friendly. In fact, I liked to go to them chiefly because I could keep an eye on her, and see that she was not annoyed by any of Scruton's guests. New guests, who did not know the ropes, were apt to be familiar, and needed checking. I did it.

Sir Theobald Walsh was a nuisance every time. He had been a guest at Scruton's parties since the beginning, long before I had ever come to one. He seemed to think, or, at any rate, he pretended to think, that that gave him some kind of a claim on Amber; and, unless something prevented him, he always spent a good deal of the evening hanging over her and talking to her with a proprietary air.

Now, as I have said, Walsh is not at all the kind of man one likes to see hanging about a nice girl. Married women are all very well; but a young girl is different. Besides, it wasn't only Walsh's ways, and what we all knew about him among ourselves, but his bad character was notorious. He had not only appeared in the divorce court as correspondent in the Cumberly scandal; but, at the inquest on the unfortunate Mrs. Bulkeley, it came out that she had committed suicide owing to the blackguardly way in which he had treated her. Also, I happened to know of the orgies—they were really orgies—that he held at The Cedars, his country house near Pinner. Naturally, he was not the kind of man who could hang about a girl without harming her reputation;

and, whenever I saw him hanging about Amber, I interrupted.

He hated to be interrupted, but I never missed a chance of doing it. I joined in their talk—or rather I joined in his talk, for Amber had very little to say to him—firmly; and every time we were soon snapping freely. I would sneer at things that he said, and he would sneer at things that I said, till our conversation grew rather cheery. Nearly always, before ten minutes were up, I had got him rabid and snarling; and generally at the end of half an hour I had driven him off to the card table. He must have lost quite a lot of money from playing baccarat in a bad temper. Sometimes, however, he would stick it out till Amber went off to bed.

Amber enjoyed our little bickerings up to a certain point; when Walsh began really to snarl, it made her uncomfortable. I scored, because she was always on my side. In fact, so far as Walsh's getting encouragement from her went, there would have been no need for me to interfere at all. She snubbed him straight and steadily all the time. But he could get on without any encouragement. She might have snubbed him ninety-nine evenings running, and the hundredth he would have turned up scowling, driven away every one, except me, who happened to be talking to her, and then leaned over her and talked to her for an hour, in a low, confidential voice, with his air of a proprietor.

One night—we had grown quite friendly enough—I said to her:

"I say, I wish you would keep away from these gambling parties. I know it's pretty dull for you, and they make an amusing break; but, all the same, they're not quite the thing for you, don't you know?"

She frowned a little, and answered slowly:

"Oh, I don't come to them because they break the dullness, but because my stepfather makes a point of it."

"I wouldn't take any notice of that, if I were you."

"Oh, but I must," she said. "Here I am, living in his house, practically de-

pendent on him. I must do what he asks me. And what forces me to do it more than anything else is that it's the only thing he does ask of me."

"Well, if that's so, I must keep on being sociable with Walsh," I sighed.

"You do annoy him," she said, and she laughed softly.

"I do it for his good," said I.

I did keep on being good to Walsh; so good that whenever he saw me, his eyes began to sparkle, and his usually amiable scowl grew blacker and blacker.

One night I had been particularly bland with him; and though we came out of Number Nine in a nice, bright, morning light, and he should have had time to cool, since Amber had been in bed four hours, it seemed that he was boiling still.

I went down the steps first, and walked toward my house, expecting him to keep his distance behind me; for outside Scruton's I always cut him.

But he caught me up at once, and said:

"Look here, Garthoyle. We've got to come to some arrangement about that girl of Scruton's."

"That's a pretty way of speaking of Miss Devine," I said.

"I'm not in a punctilious temper to-night," he growled savagely. "I'm in earnest. I'm going to have the matter settled up here and now."

I looked at his working face and saw that he was indeed serious.

"Don't be an ass," I said. "How can you settle it? The woman always settles this kind of thing."

"It's no good you're shuffling. You know she can't settle it," he snarled. "You won't let her. You keep diverting her attention from it."

"From you, you mean," said I.

"Yes, from me. You're always trying to set her against me. And it isn't as if you meant anything yourself. You don't. You're just playing the dog in the manger. You'd never marry her."

"Would you?" I asked.

"Yes, I would—I will!" he cried.

"Poor girl!" said I.

He stormed and cursed at me in a growling roar.

"Don't make so much noise; you'll wake my tenants," I protested.

He made more noise.

I waited till he had run out of breath; it gave me more time to think. Then I said:

"No; you shan't marry her—not if I can stop it. You're not fit to come near a decent girl, much less marry her. I'll stop it if I can; and I think I can."

"You think you can, do you? You infernal prig!" he cried. "Well, I'll show you all about that, and inside of a month, too."

With that, he went off down Carisbrook Street, and I turned off to my house. He had given me plenty to think about, and I was uneasy. I did not see what he could do, but I did know that he would stick at nothing where a woman was concerned. At the same time I was a good deal surprised to learn that he was carrying *le bon motif* concealed about his person.

On consideration, I did not believe in it. Certainly he would not marry Amber; he had no intention of marrying her. Well, I must look after her more carefully than ever, when he was about.

But that was where he put a spoke in my wheel. Three mornings later, Herbert Polkington came to see me. I hadn't seen him for some time; not since I had congratulated him on having been saved from marrying Kitty Maynard. He came looking his most portentous—more like a funeral than a human being—and I braced myself.

He sat down, crossed his legs, and looked at me in what he believes to be an impressive way; it makes him look like an excited codfish. Then he cleared his throat and began:

"I've come to see you about a serious matter, Rupert—a very serious matter, indeed."

"You generally do," I retorted, without any show of gratitude at all. "What is it? Fire away; and try to put it plainly."

Herbert frowned.

"It's about Miss Devine. I have been assured that you propose to contract an alliance with that young woman, the

stepdaughter of that more-than-suspect New Zealander, Scruton."

"Well, you've been assured wrong," I said. "But suppose I did? Miss Devine is a very nice girl, quite charming."

"I wish I had been misinformed," said Herbert gloomily, shaking his large head. "But my informant—"

"Who is your informant?" I asked quickly.

Herbert hesitated; then he said:

"Sir Theobald Walsh."

"The biggest blackguard in London! You Liberals do keep nice company!"

"I met him quite by accident," explained Herbert.

"We all know all about those accidents. And, now I come to think of it, it was you who first took me to gamble at Scruton's. You Liberals do lead lives!"

"As a matter of fact, I met him at one of your clubs, the Palladium!" snapped Herbert, his round face beginning to grow purplish. "And, in a case like this, I would as soon take the opinion of Sir Theobald Walsh as anybody's. His intrigues have made him an expert; and he is convinced that you are infatuated with this girl—infatuated. But it won't do, Rupert. With your name and money, you can't marry a girl who is merely a decoy in a gambling hell. That's what Scruton's house is."

"I like this from you," I said. "It's exactly what you wanted to do yourself. You wanted to marry Kitty Gage; and she was just as much, and just as little, a decoy as Miss Devine is. In fact, I think that Kitty Gage was a great deal more aware of the part she was playing than ever Miss Devine is."

"Yes; I did want to marry Kitty Maynard, and I have learned that you saved me from the marriage—"

"Saved her, my good chap—saved her," I interrupted kindly.

"—by helping Freddy Gage carry her off and marry her,"—Herbert went on, without heeding the interruption. "I am grateful to you, now, though I was very much annoyed at the time. It was an unfortunate fascination, and I had a lucky escape."

"She had, at any rate," said I.

"I could not let you fall into the very pit out of which you helped me without a word of protest and warning," Herbert continued. "And this marriage wouldn't do. Walsh is very shrewd; and we both agreed that it wouldn't do."

"I'm devilishly obliged to both of you for your interference," I said. "But I've never dreamed of marrying Miss Devine; and I'm quite sure she's never dreamed of marrying me."

"Oh, hasn't she?" sneered Herbert. "It's no use telling that kind of thing to a man of the world like me. Of course, she's had your thirty thousand a year in mind all the time."

I stood up rather suddenly.

"You'd better go, Herbert," I said quickly. "I should hate to kick a cousin out of my house."

Herbert rose suddenly, too; and he went, protesting that that was not the way to receive a well-meant remonstrance. But he went quickly.

I was really angry. Amber was the last girl in the world to think about my thirty thousand a year—the very last. He had no right, moreover, to talk about my marrying her. We were not at all on that kind of footing. We were just good friends, and nothing more.

I was glad that Herbert had gone quickly; on second thoughts, I should certainly have kicked him out of the house. At any rate, I had checked his interfering, and I thought no more about him. I had two or three of my usual talks with Amber, in the central garden, or at her stepfather's parties. Then, for two days, she did not come into the garden once—at any rate, while I was in it. I began to wonder what was keeping her away, and I was quite surprised to find how much I missed her. When I first caught sight of her at her stepfather's next party, my heart gave quite a funny little jump.

But something had gone wrong. She did not smile when I shook hands with her; she looked at me in quite a different way. There was no friendliness in her eyes. She answered only "Yes" and "No" to everything that I said to her.

Presently I left her, resolving that I would talk to her when she was not so busy with her stepfather's guests, and went to the card table. I wondered a little what had upset her. Then Walsh came, and she was very different with him. She smiled and talked to him quite cheerfully. They seemed all of a sudden to have become quite friends. I was a good deal annoyed. An hour later, when Walsh was playing baccarat, and no one else was with her, I went to her and tried to talk to her again. It was no use. She looked at me with no expression at all in her face, and had nothing whatever to say to me.

At the party after that, I made my effort. I tried to get her to tell me what I had done to offend her. She answered that she did not know what I meant, and pretended that I had no reason at all to fancy that I had offended her. Then she let Walsh talk to her for more than an hour, and seemed to enjoy it thoroughly. It was very annoying.

I saw that some of the other men noticed her new friendliness with Walsh; and I saw that they did not like it, for they were friends of hers. Then I was helping myself to a drink at the side table when the piebald duke came over to it and began to mix a brandy and soda.

He looked at me in a rather hesitating way; then he said:

"I say, Garthoyle, that little girl—Scruton's stepdaughter—she's a friend of yours, isn't she?"

"Yes," I answered, wondering what was coming.

He paused, and looked at the cheerful pair on the sofa.

"That hound, Walsh, seems to be getting very friendly with her. Doesn't it want checking? You know what Walsh is with women. And she seems a nice child—simple. She has no business to be at these parties at all, don't you know? Couldn't you play a little less, and keep her amused—keep Walsh away?"

"I might try," I said. "Not that she will take any harm from Walsh—she's not the kind."

"Yes, yes; of course. But she's very

young. No use taking any risks. You know what women are—silly."

"Well, I'll do what I can," I promised. "But I don't think I can do much at present. Either I've offended Miss Devine, or Walsh has been telling her lies about me."

He looked at Walsh not at all as if he liked or admired him.

"I should think it's that Walsh has been lying," he said.

"Well, anyhow, I'm afraid I shall have to play a waiting game."

"It would be an awfully good thing if you could find a reasonable excuse for blacking both his eyes and keeping him at home for a while." The duke was most vicious.

"He wouldn't give me the chance. He knows too much about me," I said. "If a middleweight amateur champion wants a scrap, he has to find a perfect stranger to oblige him. As a matter of fact, I gave Walsh a fair chance a few nights ago. I told him several unpleasant things about himself. But he didn't take it."

We finished our drinks and went back to the table. I was a good deal surprised by the duke's speaking to me. I had not thought that he could keep his attention off the game long enough to notice such a thing as the friendliness between Amber and Walsh. His warning made the matter much more serious. A duke is naturally an expert in women; they run after him so. He must be thinking that things were getting pretty dangerous. I knew that Walsh was in dead earnest; and now there was no relying on Amber's dislike of him. He seemed to have worn it down.

If only I could find out how I had offended her and set that right, it would be a different matter; for, if she and I were friends again, I thought that I could queer Walsh's game. But I could not think what on earth I had done, or what she had been told I had done, though I thought of every possible thing.

Then Walsh himself gave me the hint. At Scruton's next party he was sitting by Amber when I came in.

"Ah, the gay abductor!" he said, in his sneering way.

Then I tumbled to it. He was friendly enough with Herbert to have learned from him how I had helped Gage carry off Kitty Maynard. I might take it as pretty certain that Herbert had also told him that I had said that I never dreamed of marrying Amber. Walsh had told Amber this with embellishments. He had made it seem absolutely offensive. No wonder she was angry with me! I could have wrung his neck cheerfully.

When I came to consider the matter, I found myself no better off now that I had guessed why she was furious with me than I was before. I could not go to her and say:

"Look here! You've been told that I've been saying that I should never dream of marrying you. I didn't say it the way you think I did."

It was absurd. I did want to wring Walsh's neck.

Well, I could only sit tight and keep my temper. I did. I took Amber's snubbings like a lamb, a cheerful lamb. But once or twice when Walsh chipped in, I was pleased to get the chance to show that the lambness was only skin deep. Certainly I gave him every excuse to punch my head. I only wished he would. But to Amber, I tried to make it plain that whatever she might say, I was still her friend. Yet it was hard work to see her playing with fire, and keep quiet. If I had not been so tied up, if I could have let myself go, and made up my mind to marry her, and to ask her to marry me, I thought that I could get into a position to set things right. But I could not. The ghost trick stuck in my mind.

All the while she went on growing more and more friendly with Walsh. I found that she was even letting him help her take her waifs into the country for afternoon outings. He spoke to her about it before me, just to annoy me. He took them in his motor car, just as I had taken the anarchists; and she went with them to look after them. I must say that that did annoy me worse than anything. I could only hope that her

old distrust of him was still alive under this new friendliness; and I had an idea that she showed herself far more friendly with him when I was there than when I was not. He tried to be quite insufferable with his triumphant airs, but they did not get at me much. I took it that he was only putting them on to annoy me.

Naturally, I was delighted to see, one evening at Scruton's, that Walsh had received a setback. Amber had plainly quarreled with him; she would have nothing to do with him. He kept leaving the baccarat table and coming over to her; but from his face I gathered that she was snubbing him worse than she snubbed me. He was a blackish purple. At the same time, she showed herself no friendlier with me; she did not use me to annoy Walsh. Then I thought that she looked rather unhappy; and it spoiled my pleasure in her quarrel with Walsh. It looked as if she were feeling unhappy because she had quarreled with him.

I could not help saying:

"I'm glad to see you've found Walsh out. I thought he was pretty sure to give himself away. He's not the sort of man that it's safe for a woman to be decent to at all."

She was sitting stiffly enough, but she drew herself up even more stiffly, and her pretty eyes sparkled, and she said:

"I—I don't see anything whatever to choose between Sir Theobald Walsh and Lord Garthoyle."

"Oh, but there is—lots," I assured her.

She said a little breathlessly:

"Oh, you have—you have a—a——"

"Cheek? Yes; I have. I was born with it," I replied, stroking it. "But, all the same, it's true. And, honestly, where Walsh is concerned, you have to be careful—you do, really. You can tell him I said so, too."

She looked at me as if she did not know quite what unpleasant thing to say—as if I was too aggravating for words. She opened her lips; then she shut them and said nothing.

Of course, it was cheek; but I was

glad to have given her the warning. I suppose, however, that that was why she let Walsh make peace with her. It really looked as if he would win out and marry her.

It worried me, and made me restless. I felt so helpless to prevent her making a mess of things. Yet, somehow, I could not get it out of my head that she did not really care for Walsh, that she was just friendly with him and nothing more. I wondered how he would take it when he found out that it was so. I was afraid that he might make himself violently unpleasant. I could only hope that I might be at hand when he did, for I did not think that, even if she went to Scruton, he would be of much help to her.

One afternoon I went down to Wembley Park for some polo practice. As I motored into the Gardens, on my return, I saw a small and rather ragged boy hurrying along the pavement, and recognized Amber's protégé, Robespierre Briggs, the anarchist. I stopped the car, and called to him.

He came running up, crying:

"Mr. Garth, it's Miss Amber! She's bin carried away!"

"Carried away! What do you mean?" I exclaimed roughly.

"It's Sir Theobald Walsh—'im what's a baronit. 'E an' Miss Amber took us to Chipperfield Common in 'is moter, the syne as you did. An' we got outer the car, an' 'e shoves a 'ndful of money—silver—inter my 'and, an' catches 'old of Miss Amber an' pulls 'er back inter the car. An' she tells 'im to let 'er go; an' 'e says 'e ain't never goin' to let 'er go. An' she calls out ter me: 'Go to Mr. Scruton, Garthoyle Gardens, Robbie, an' tell 'im!' An' the car goes orf an' leaves us there. An' I gives Cherlie most of the money, an' I run most of the wye to King's Langley styton, an' a tryne to London come in, an' I come by it to Euston; an' got 'ere in a bus; an' there ain't a copper abart, an' I can't find which is Mr. Scruton's 'ouse!"

He was white and breathless, and ready to cry. I bade him jump into the

car and ran around the triangle to Scruton's.

We were taken straight to him in his smoking room, and found him sleeping peacefully in an easy-chair.

Our entrance woke him, and I said: "I've nice news for you, Scruton. That blackguard, Walsh, has kidnaped Miss Devine."

"Kidnaped! What the deuce are you talking about?" he cried, waking up thoroughly.

I told him Robespierre's story of the abduction.

"I wouldn't have had this happen for fifty thousand pounds!" he cried. "Amber's all the kith and kin I've got in the world! How are we to find them? How are we to get at the swine?"

He was growing, if anything, blacker than Walsh himself.

"Well, there's just a chance," I said. "Walsh has a house near Pinner, and I happen to know that he uses it in his love affairs. Now Pinner's on the way between Chipperfield and London. It's any odds that he's taken her there. He doesn't know that I know anything about it. We might try it on the chance. My car's at the door."

"By Jove! It is a chance! Quite a good chance!" cried Scruton.

He ran across the room to a bureau, opened a drawer, took a revolver from it, and thrust it into his hip pocket, saying:

"I always feel more comfortable carrying a gun when there's trouble about."

I gathered that he had not spent all his life in quiet New Zealand. We hurried out to the car; I gave Robespierre a tenner for his promptitude; and Scruton and I jumped into the tonneau. When I want the best got out of it, I leave it to Gaston; I do not drive it myself then. I told him to get to Pinner as fast as he could, and he set her going as we settled back in our seats.

Then Scruton turned to me.

"What does Walsh mean by it? What the devil does he mean by it?" he asked.

"He sticks at nothing where a woman is concerned. I should have thought you knew that."

"Does he think that I'm the kind of

man to have my womankind kidnaped? If any harm has come to Amber, I'll throttle him!"

"If he's taken her to the Cedars, we shall be in plenty of time. She won't have come to any harm," I said. "But Walsh is very sidey; he thinks that, where a commoner like you is concerned, a British baronet can do anything he chooses."

I thought it as well to get Scruton furious. Besides, it was true.

"Oh, he does, does he? Well, I'll teach him to play a scoundrelly trick on a young girl! I'll wring his neck for him, all right—all right!" he roared. "And the duke did give me a hint to keep my eye on him. But I didn't give heed to it, for I knew that Amber was all right. I never dreamed that Walsh would play this game on me."

"Walsh is just the man to do it. You see, he doesn't give a damn for a man like you," I said.

"I'll teach him all about that!" roared Scruton.

I saw no point in telling him that Walsh had told me that he wanted to marry Amber, and was not up to serious mischief, but merely trying to force her to marry him, by compromising her in exactly the same way that Freddy Gage had forced Kitty Maynard to marry him to save her from Herbert. In fact, Walsh had cribbed the idea from me; the one abduction had led to the other.

At the same time, I was infernally uneasy. There was no trusting Walsh, and if we did not find Amber at the Cedars, I should be frightened out of my life.

Scruton was properly furious. All the way he was either growling or raging at Walsh; and I did hope to goodness that he would get the chance of dealing with the hound.

Gaston made short work of the road to Pinner. But, oh, it was a devilishly uncomfortable journey! I was so frightened lest Walsh should have taken Amber somewhere else.

I did not let Gaston drive the car to the front gates of the Cedars. I told him to turn down a side lane half a

mile on the London side of it; and we got out at a gate in a little wood.

Scruton and I hurried through the wood to the gate of the garden. It was locked, but we lifted it off its hinges and slipped into the covert of a shrubbery that ran right up to the house. I was pleased to see that several of the windows were open, and that a glass door led from the house to the garden.

"Somebody's living here, at any rate," said Scruton.

We came under covert to within ten yards of the house; then we heard a murmur of voices from an open window at the left side of it on the ground floor. As we worked our way noiselessly toward it, I heard the tones of Amber's voice, and my heart gave a little jump of relief.

When we faced the window, there was Walsh, sitting with his back to us, right in the window seat, with one elbow sticking out over the sill. Beyond him, sitting at a little table with tea on it, was Amber. I saw that her face was pale, and that she was looking at Walsh with an extraordinary expression of contempt and dislike.

"For the hundredth time, I tell you there's no way out of it—you've got to marry me," said Walsh, in a lazy, aggravating drawl.

"If you were the only man in the world, I wouldn't—after to-day," said Amber.

She spoke quite calmly, without any temper, but as if she were thoroughly in earnest; and her voice was as full of dislike and contempt as her eyes.

"After to-day—after this visit you're paying me—I'm the only man left in the world who will marry you," taunted Walsh.

"That makes no difference—you detestable cad!" said Amber slowly.

"What a way to speak of your future husband! On your wedding day, too!" said Walsh; and he laughed quietly, as if he were enjoying himself thoroughly. "And do bear in mind that it's only out of natural nobility of nature that I'm marrying you at all. It isn't really necessary."

He laughed again—a laugh that made

the very toes of my boots itch to kick him.

While he laughed, in three noiseless strides, Scruton crossed the turf, and leaned in at the window, and his arm shot around Walsh's neck, scragging him. Then, with furious jerks and tugs, he began to drag him out of the window.

"Mind his neck!" I warned.

"Damn his neck! Come out, will you?" bellowed Scruton.

And Walsh came out, all waving arms and legs, grunting, black in the face with fury and suffocation.

"Get Amber away!" ordered Scruton.

She was already at the window; I caught hold of her, lifted her through it, and carried her into the shrubbery. It seemed the natural thing to do.

"Put me down! Put me down!" she cried, trying to twist out of my arms.

"All right," I said. "But we've got to hurry."

I put her down, but kept an arm around her as I hurried her along. She tried, not very violently, to push it away. But it seemed all right where it was—to me—and I kept it there. She might have tripped and fallen on the rough ground of the shrubbery.

"Oh, I *was* so frightened! I am so glad you came!" Her voice quivered.

"And I was frightened, too—awfully frightened. I know that blackguard Walsh. It was the luckiest thing in the world that I lighted on Robespierre."

"Oh, it was lucky!" she cried.

We were nearly at the bottom of the shrubbery when Walsh began to shout. I pushed through it out into the open, and looked back. He and Scruton were going at it hammer and tongs on the lawn in front of the house. I had no fear for Scruton; he was the heavier man, and as hard as nails, while Walsh was soft, and on the puffy side. He was howling for the servants. While I looked, he went down heavily; and he did not get up. I hurried Amber out of the garden.

In the wood, I loosed her—not that I wanted to—and we went through it more slowly.

"Oh, I *was* glad to see you!" she repeated. "How did you come to learn about it? Where did you see Robespierre?"

"I found him wandering about the Gardens, looking for your stepfather's house; and he told me that Walsh had carried you off."

"I knew he'd find my stepfather. I was sure of it," said Amber. "But I didn't see how my stepfather could find me—how he would know where that horrible brute had taken me. I thought that it might be days and days before he found out; and, oh, I *was* frightened!"

"Well, I knew of this lair of Walsh's; and we drew it on the chance. It was lucky that he brought you here. If he hadn't, it might have been days and days before we found you."

She shivered, and we hurried on a few steps without speaking.

Then she said:

"It does seem strange that it should always be you who helps me when I'm in a difficulty." And she looked at me with thankful eyes.

"No one would think it if they saw the brutal way you treat me," I returned quickly.

"Oh, that!" she said, blushing. "Well, you—you deserved it."

"No, I didn't. I did nothing to make you jump on me for weeks. And you wouldn't tell me what I'd done to offend you. What was it?" I asked, jumping at the chance of clearing things up.

She shook her head, and blushed again.

"I'm not going to tell you."

"I know quite well that Walsh told you some lie about me."

"Perhaps it was."

"Of course, it was. And I don't think it was at all friendly to believe it; at least, you ought to have given me a chance of clearing it up."

"Perhaps I ought. But it seemed to be the truth. He wasn't the only one to say it."

It had been that ass, Herbert.

"I don't believe that you believed it—

really. You just made it an excuse to jump on me."

"Oh, no—no! I didn't *want* us to be unfriendly! I did believe it, truly!" she protested.

"Well, it was very wrong of you. But we're friends again now?"

"Yes—yes; we're friends again now," she repeated softly. And I thought that her eyes shone so brightly because there were tears in them.

Scruton came running around a corner of the path behind us, carrying a broom handle.

"Hurry up! I've drawn a whole swarm!" he cried.

I slipped my arm around Amber again, and we ran through the wood. As we reached the car, we heard the clumping of thick boots and the grunting of voices behind us. We scrambled into the tonneau, and I told Gaston to let the car go.

"I laid him out, all right, all right!" said Scruton cheerfully. "And then I lammed him with this broom handle. It was all I could find. I wasn't half through with him when a gardener and a chauffeur, husky fellows, came bustling around the house; and, as they came, they shouted to some one else. So I gave Walsh three last souvenirs, and faded."

"I'm so glad you thrashed him!" exclaimed Amber.

"Yes, missie; but for the future you cut out motoring with British baronets," said Scruton.

"Yes, stick to peers; they're far safer," said I.

CHAPTER VIII.

I dined at Scruton's that night; and a very pleasant dinner it was, since he had to go off to a bridge party at ten o'clock and leave me and Amber together. I tried very hard to learn from her why she had insisted on quarreling with me, so severely and for so long; but, though I teased her about it most of the evening, I could not get her to tell me. But I was pretty sure—in fact, I was quite sure—that she had been set

against me by some lie of Walsh's, probably backed up by that idiot, Herbert.

I was a long time getting to sleep that night. The whole of this Walsh business—the way his making love to Amber had worried me, the fright I had had when I learned that he had carried her off in his motor car, that anxious journey to Pinner, and the enormous relief that I had felt when I heard her voice through the open window—had opened my eyes as wide as they could be opened. It was quite plain to me that my friendship for her was a good deal more than friendship.

Of course, it would be delightful to marry her; she was charming, and thoroughly nice, and as pretty as a girl could be. I, at any rate, could not remember ever having known or seen half so pretty a girl. If she would marry me—and I thought that she would, in time, if I were patient—she would make a perfectly ripping wife. But that confounded ghost trick! There was no getting over it.

That trick was like nothing else in her; it did not fit in with the rest of her at all. In fact, there was no explaining it by any other single thing I had ever seen in her. It did seem likely that there was some simple explanation of it; but, worry as I might, I could not hit on it.

I might, of course, have gone straight to her and asked her about it. But I did not like to; in fact, I did not dare to. There was that awkward fact that, when I had caught her playing the ghost, I had kissed her. I remembered that kiss quite well, but I also remembered her fury at it, and the slap, with all the righteous indignation behind it, that she had given me. I was quite sure that she had taken that kiss very seriously indeed; probably she had been awfully cut up about it; very likely she detested the unknown man who had kissed her. I knew that she never dreamed that I was he. If she did learn that I was the offender, judging from the way she had treated me over that silly lie of Walsh's, she would probably have no more to do with me.

Of course, it was very unreasonable

to take a snatched kiss seriously. It might happen to anybody. But Amber was like that; and, of course, women never are reasonable about that kind of thing.

It was a very difficult business; and for the next few days I worried and worried over it. I could not make up my mind what to do. The Walsh affair, too, had changed Amber. She had grown rather shy with me. It was all right after we had been talking a while; but she was shy when she just met me, and if I came on her suddenly she blushed—faintly, but quite distinctly. It always made me want to pick her up and kiss her, and tell her that she was the only girl in the world for me. After a while, I could not think of the kiss that I had given her, when I had caught her playing the ghost, without wanting to kiss her again.

Finally I made up my mind that the only thing to do was to bolt, and be quick about it. A course of foreign travel was my only chance of curing myself; and the sooner I took it, the less painful I should find it. I saw plainly that it was not a case for big-game shooting. If I got away to the loneliness of the woods and hills, I should only be worse. I should want Amber worse than ever. A good dose of racketing about the capitals of Europe was what I wanted.

I put in three days at Paris, with lots of wild hilarity in them. Then the whole place seemed to turn sour, and, after lunch on the fourth day, I told Mowat to pack my things and take tickets for Berlin, a much more amusing town, when you know the ropes, than people will admit. But I could only stand it for a day. I was restless, and bored beyond relief. At six in the evening I told Mowat to pack, and came straight back to Garthoyle Gardens.

I was no sooner in my own house, within three hundred yards of Amber, than the restlessness left me. I wanted to see her as soon as possible, of course; but I could wait an hour or two without an effort.

I dined at home, with a much better appetite than I had had in Paris or Ber-

lin; and then I went out into the central garden. It was late, for I had dined late; it must have been nearly half past ten. There was not much chance of finding Amber, for she did not often come into the garden at night. But there was a chance; and I strolled all around it, looking for her.

I was about fifty yards from the ring of shrubberies that forms the center of the garden when a figure burst out of one of the lawns in the ring and came running toward me. I saw that it was a woman; then I saw that it was a girl; and then I saw that it was Amber herself. When she was ten yards from me I saw that she was as white as a sheet and was panting and sobbing. She almost ran into me before she saw me; and then, pulling up, she fairly tumbled into my arms.

"Whatever is it?" I cried, holding her up.

"Oh, I've been so frightened!" she gasped.

She was as cold as ice, and trembling as I have never seen any one tremble before. I half carried, half dragged her to the nearest bench, and sat down on it with her in my arms.

"Gently—gently! You're quite safe, now. You needn't be frightened any longer," I said; and I kissed her.

It was rather taking advantage of her terror; but I was startled and did not think of that; and it seemed the natural thing to do—just as one would kiss a frightened child. She did not seem to mind it—and I kissed her again.

She sobbed for two or three minutes; then she recovered enough to say:

"Oh, I'm so glad you came! I should never have got as far as the gate—never."

She looked up the path with terrified eyes, and shrank closer to me.

"Who was it? Who frightened you? Was it that brute, Walsh?" I asked, beginning to get angry; and I half rose with the idea of going and smashing him.

"No—no—it was no one. It was—I thought I saw——" She panted.

"Saw what?" I soothed.

She pulled herself together with an

effort that shook her; then she went on, in a steadier voice:

"I was coming toward the center of the garden—and I thought I saw a man—but I didn't stop to look; he frightened me. And I ran and ran; and, the farther I ran, the more frightened I grew. I felt as if he were after me. And I couldn't have run much farther when I met you; I should have dropped."

"Why, you poor child!" I said, and I kissed her again; and then suddenly she flushed, as if she had just noticed the kisses for the first time, and tried to slip away from me.

I held her tight.

"No," I said; "you're more comfortable where you are. And you feel so much safer."

I drew her closer to me, and kissed her again. She was quite still.

We sat on that bench for a long time—I had it taken away to Garth Royal, later; and it is in the rose garden there, under a stone canopy. We did not say very much, because there did not seem to be anything to say. It seemed to be quite enough to be sitting there together. At last, she said that she must be going, or the house would be locked up, and she would have to ring up a servant to let her in.

We walked on out of the garden, going more slowly the nearer we came to the gate; and then we were some time in her stepfather's porch before she rang the bell.

I walked back to my house in a quite contented frame of mind. Amber's fright had forced my hand and settled things for us. It had, for the time being, put the ghost trick out of my mind. In spite of the fact that I had spent the night before traveling across Europe, I was a long while getting to sleep. I had to think about Amber.

When, blushing and smiling, she met me in the garden, next morning, she looked perfectly adorable. We lost no time in finding a secluded corner; and we were very happy in it.

We had plenty of things to talk about; but our talk was rather jerky and interrupted. It must have been

nearly an hour before we got on to the subject of her fright the night before. I was sure that it had been her fancy, but she was still quite sure that she had seen some one.

At last, I said carelessly, without thinking:

"Then I'll tell you what it was. It was a judgment on you."

"A judgment?" she asked, looking puzzled.

"Yes; a judgment on you for the fright you gave me."

"Me? Give you a fright?" she said, looking more puzzled.

"Yes; when you played the ghost the night I slept at Number Nine."

She happened to be sitting on my knee. She jumped up and stared at me, blinking, as if she couldn't believe her ears.

"You—you—was it you?" she stammered; and there was a fine flush on her face, and her eyes began to sparkle.

"It was, indeed," said I.

"You—you—were that—that horrid cad?" she cried.

"Oh, come," I protested, rather taken aback. "What did you expect me to do? I catch a pretty girl playing a trick like that on me to get her stepfather out of paying his rent, and of course I kiss her—*à la guerre comme à la guerre*. I couldn't beat you for the horrid fright you'd given me, could I?"

"My stepfather's rent! What do you mean?" she cried.

My heart jumped joyfully. I had been right; she had not known her stepfather's little game. I had always been sure of it, really.

"Why, didn't you know? Your stepfather was trying to get his house rent free on the ground that Number Nine was haunted," I blurted out, like a born idiot.

She stood quite still, staring at me, and wringing her hands.

"So that was his joke!" she said. "And—and what you must have been thinking of me all this time! Oh——"

"I thought that your stepfather had told you that it was just a joke he was playing on a friend," I said quickly.

"You did not!" she cried.

"I did!" cried I.

"You did not! You thought—oh, you thought that I was a party to the trick!"

"I did not—never. I knew you couldn't be," I denied stoutly.

"You did! I know you did!" she repeated; and she turned and went quickly out of the lawn, not straight, but wavering, as if she did not quite see where she was going.

I did not follow her. At the moment, I did not quite see what to do. I thought that I had better give her time to get over it a little. It was a mess; it was not only that she believed me to have been thinking badly of her, I was also the person she had been detesting for that kiss. I thought that she would get over the kiss, but she would be some time getting over my having believed that she had been a party to her stepfather's little game. I was sure that that would hurt her horribly.

At first, I made up my mind to give her a week to get over it somewhat. Then I considered how horribly hurt she would be feeling all that time, and how wretched it would make her. I could not stand it. It must be stopped at once, somehow. Then I had an idea; there was just a chance that she might be bullied out of her wretchedness at once, while she was still upset. It was worth trying, at any rate.

I walked quickly to Number Nine. On the way, it occurred to me that her stepfather had got us into the mess, and that the least he could do would be to help us out of it. He might have a great deal of influence with her; she might even be afraid of him. It would be so much better that she should have one unpleasant quarter of an hour than that she should be miserable for a week. Besides, I should probably find it very difficult, if not quite impossible, to get an interview with her on my own; he might at least work that for me.

The butler said that Mr. Scruton was at home, and took me to the smoking room. Scruton was sitting in a big armchair, smoking a cigar, with a novel on his knee. When I came into the room, he jumped up to greet me with

such a bright face that I fancied that novel reading was not one of his strong points.

We greeted one another, he gave me a cigarette, and we sat down facing one another.

"I've come to see you on an important matter," I said. "I want to marry your stepdaughter."

Scruton rose, came slowly to me with a solemn air, held out an enormous hand, and said:

"Shake, Lord Garthoyle."

I shook the enormous hand; and he said solemnly:

"She is yours."

"That's just what she isn't; and it's your fault," I said.

Scruton's face fell.

"My fault?"

"Yes. I had fixed the matter up, and I was just thinking of beginning to discuss the date of our marriage, when I happened to say something about the ghost trick you set her to play on me."

"She didn't know why she was playing it; she thought it was just a joke," said Scruton quickly.

"Yes; but when she found out that I was the man she had played it on, she refused to have anything more to do with me. You see, when I jumped out of bed and caught her, I kissed her."

"That was not the way to treat a lady," said Scruton gloomily. "Any lady would resent it."

"Well, that's your fault; it was you that put her into the false position. It couldn't have happened if you hadn't," I said. "But that isn't the worst of it. I let out that I thought she knew that you were trying to get off paying your rent."

"But you ought to have known for certain that she didn't know anything about it. A girl like Amber wouldn't have a thing to say to a bluff like that," said Scruton.

"Of course, I know that now," I said shortly. "But how on earth was I to know that she was a girl like that at the time? It's confusing to catch a girl in a woolen dressing gown, walking up and down one's bedroom at one o'clock in

the morning, and sighing like a woman who committed suicide in it."

"Well, it will be a great disappointment to me if this match falls through," Scruton said slowly. "I have always expected Amber to marry well; but this—this surpasses my most sanguine expectations. I shall settle a hundred thousand pounds on her if she marries you, Lord Garthoyle."

"That's very handsome of you; but as things are at present, she won't marry me. She's dead set against it," I said gloomily.

He frowned.

"But she'll forgive you; you must persuade her; she must listen to reason. Surely something can be done."

"Something has got to be done. Your infernal thriftiness in the matter of house rent has got us into this mess, and I think that it's up to you to get us out of it," I said firmly.

"Well, I'll see what I can do," he promised, evidently trying to think of a plan. "I'm not a ladies' man, of course; but I'm not unused to women. I've been married several times."

"Several times!" I howled.

"Yes; when I was in business on the Pacific slope—married and divorced. It's very common out there. But am I to understand that before you let this out, Amber had definitely accepted you?"

"Oh, yes; quite definitely," I assured him.

"Well, an acceptance of a proposal of marriage is a very serious thing, and I shall have to speak to her seriously about it," he said solemnly, and he rang the bell.

The butler came, and Scruton told him to tell Amber that he wanted to speak to her in the smoking room. We waited two or three minutes, and then the butler came back and said that Miss Devine had a headache and was staying in her room. I wondered whether she had guessed that I had followed her home.

"Tell her that, headache or no headache, I want to speak to her at once," said Scruton impatiently, and the butler went.

"Look here, you're not going to be harsh with her. She's a good deal upset," I said, beginning to repent a little at having brought him into it.

"I shall do what the circumstances require—no more and no less," said Scruton.

He took up his stand on the hearth-rug, and kept pulling at his beard. We waited for nearly five minutes, without saying much to one another. Then the door opened, and Amber came in.

She was pale, and she looked as if she had been crying her eyes out. But at the sight of me, her face flamed red enough, and she stopped short.

"What is it you want?" she asked defiantly, and it looked as if Scruton was going to have a difficult job.

"Lord Garthoyle has come to me with a complaint—a very serious complaint about you," said Scruton, in a very solemn tone.

"Lord Garthoyle—a complaint—about me?" repeated Amber, rather as if the idea had taken her breath away.

"Yes; he tells me that he did you the honor to make you a proposal of marriage. Is that so?" Scruton went on, in the same solemn tone.

"Yes; he did. But—" began Amber.

"And he also tells me that you accepted it; and then that you suddenly changed your mind, and rejected him."

"Did he tell you why?" cried Amber.

"Let us keep to the facts," said Scruton, with a lordly wave of his hand. "And I'm shocked—yes, shocked beyond measure—to find that you have been playing fast and loose with this—er—er—amiable young man."

"Fast and loose! Amiable!" repeated Amber, in a stupefied sort of voice.

"Fast and loose," said Scruton; and he reminded me of a talking steam roller. "You accepted his proposal of marriage, and in—in— How long was it?" He turned to me.

"About ten hours," I said.

"As short a time as that! Monstrous!" cried Scruton very indignantly. "In ten hours you chuck—you—er—er—reject him. It's shocking, this coquetry!"

"Coquetry!" said Amber, in a gasp.
 "Yes; coquetry—heartless coquetry!"
 roared Scruton. "I say, it's shocking!
 Why, dash it all! It's bad form! Well,
 I have sent for you to tell you that I
 will not have it!" He was fairly bel-
 lowing now. "I will not have a step-
 child of mine behaving in this disgrace-
 ful way. You will marry Lord Garth-
 oyle in a month from now—"

"But——" cried Amber, looking a
 little stunned.

"Not a word! Not a word!" bel-
 lowed Scruton. "You marry Lord
 Garthoyle in a month from now; and
 that's all there is to it. I'm going
 straight to my lawyers to instruct them
 to draw up the settlements."

He walked to the door rather quickly,
 and was out of the room before Amber
 could recover herself.

She turned on me furiously, with
 blazing eyes.

"To come to my stepfather! Oh, you
 have—you have a—a——"

"Cheek—yes—I was born with it.
 I've told you so before," I said, walking

quietly across the room. "But there
 was no one else to go to. Surely your
 stepfather's the proper person. He's
 your guardian, and all that sort of thing,
 don't you know? And, after all, you
 can't deny that he has settled the matter
 in a thoroughly satisfactory way."

"Settled it! You think he's settled
 it? It isn't settled at all!" she cried, if
 anything more furiously.

"You heard what your stepfather
 said. Of course it's settled."

"It isn't settled!"

"Come, come! It's no good kicking
 against the pricks," I said gently.
 "Come and sit down here, and we'll
 settle next where we'll spend our hon-
 ey-moon."

"Oh, you—how dare you?" she raged,
 and she made a dash for the door.

It was just what I was expecting, and
 I was ready. She dashed right into my
 arms, and I picked her up.

"Rupert, don't!" she cried.

The "Rupert" was all I wanted; so I
 did.



THE PRINCESS PASSES

THE princess passes!" once the cry
 Of feudal lord and baron knight;
 "The princess passes" now, and I,
 Divining her, salute at sight.

She hears, though silent my acclaim;
 She sees, though only in my eyes
 The sign of homage as she came.
 We look beyond mere outward guise—

She, princess, I, a pilgrim soul
 Who bring for gift but love alone.
 She passes, but the glance I stole
 Gives me a kingdom all my own!

JANE C. CROWELL.



FLOROMOND and Frisonnette, who are giddy with a sense of wealth now that they have three rooms, and flowers growing on their own balcony, and sit upon chairs that they have actually bought and paid for, held a reception last Monday. The occasion was a christening. Floromond and Frisonnette are, of course, Monsieur and Madame Joliceur, and they live in the part of Paris that is nearest to Arcadia. Among those present were Monsieur Tricotrin, the unadmired poet; Monsieur Pitou, the composer of no repute; Monsieur Lajeunie, whose stirring romances have not reached the printing press, and Monsieur Sanquereau, the equally distinguished sculptor.

Though the company were poor in pocket, they were rich in benevolence; and, since the dearth of sous forbade silver mugs, they modeled their gifts upon the example of the good fairies. Advancing graciously to the cradle, the bard bestowed upon the female infant the genius of poesy.

"Epics and odes," he declared, "shall fall from her lips like the gentle dew from heaven!"

"And symphonies," said the musician, "she shall rain upon her path as Englishwomen rain hairpins."

That she might be equipped more fully yet for the stress of modern life, the novelist endowed her with the power of surpassing narrative; while the

sculptor, in his turn, contributed to her quiver the preëminence of Praxiteles.

Then Frisonnette hung over her baby, saying: "And one boon besides—let her marry her sweetheart and always remember that a husband's love is better than an ermine cloak!"—an allusion that moved Floromond to such tenderness that he forthwith took his wife in his arms, regardless of us all, and that reminded your obedient servant of their story.

When Floromond beheld her first, she was in a shop window, the most tempting exhibit that a shop window had displayed to him in all his five-and-twenty years. If he had stayed in the quarter where he belonged, it would not have happened. It was early on a spring morning, and she was posing a hat for the enticement of ladies who would tread the Rue La Fayette later in the day. Floromond, sunning himself like a lord, though he was nothing better than a painter, went on to the Garden of the Tuileries, noting how nicely the birds sang and thinking foolish thoughts.

"Had I a thousand-franc note in my pocket instead of an importunate bill from a washerwoman," ran his reverie, "I would go back and buy that hat, and when she asked me where to send it I would say: 'I do not know your name and address, mademoiselle!' Then, having departed without another word,

leaving her speechless with amazement and delight, I should never see her any more—until, not too long afterward, we found ourselves by accident in the same omnibus. *Ciel*, how blue her eyes were!”

And, though he did not omit to reprove himself in the most conscientious manner, and the weather changed for the worse, his admiration drew him to the Rue La Fayette at the same hour every day.

Frisonnette's demeanor behind the plate glass was propriety itself. But she could not be unconscious that the young man's pace always slackened in the downpour as he approached Madame Auréole's; she could not be insensible of the homage of his gaze. That Tuesday morning when, dripping, he bowed, his salutation was so respectful that she felt she would be inhuman to ignore it.

So the time came when they trod the Rue La Fayette together, making confessions to each other, after the shop shut.

“I used to wonder at first whether you noticed me as I went by,” he told her wistfully.

“I noticed you from the beginning,” she owned; “you have such a funny walk. The day that you were late—”

“I had pawned my watch. *Sapristi*, how I raced! It makes me perspire to think of it.”

“I took five minutes longer than usual to dress the window, waiting for you.”

“If I had guessed! And you did not divine that I came on purpose?”

She shook her head.

“I used to think that you must be employed in the neighborhood.”

“What? You took me for a clerk?” asked the artist, horrified.

“Only at the start. I soon saw that you couldn't be that—your clothes were too shabby, and your hair was so long.”

“I could have wished you to correct the impression by reason of my air of intellect. However, to talk sensibly, could the prettiest girl in France ever care for a man who had shabby clothes and a funny walk?”

“Well, when she was beside him she

would not remark them much,” admitted Frisonnette shyly. “But I do not think that you should ask me conundrums until you have talked politics with my aunt; I feel sure she would consider it premature.”

“Mademoiselle,” said Floromond, “I am rejoiced to hear that your aunt has such excellent judgment. Few things would give me greater pleasure than to agree with her politics as soon as you can procure me the invitation.”

And one day Floromond and Frisonnette descended the steps of a certain *mairie* arm in arm—Frisonnette in a white frock and a flutter—and the elderly gentleman in the *salles des mariages*, to whom brides were more commonplace than blackberries, looked after this one with something like sentiment behind his pince-nez. A policeman at the gate was distinctly heard to murmur: “*Epatanté!*” And so rapidly had the rumor of her fairness flown that there were nearly as many spectators on the sidewalk as if it had been a marriage of money with vehicles from the livery stables.

The bride's aunt wore her *moiré antique*, with coral bracelets, and at breakfast in the restaurant she wept. But, as was announced on the menu: Wedding couples and their parties were offered free admission to the zoölogical gardens; pianos were at the disposal of the ladies; and an admirable photographer executed GRATUITOUSLY portraits of the couples, or a group of their guests. At the promise of being photographed in the *moiré antique*, a thing that had not occurred to her for thirty years, the old lady recovered her spirits, and if Tricotrin, in proposing the health of the happy pair, had not digressed into tearful reminiscences of a blighted love story of his own, there would have been no further pathetic incident.

Floromond and Frisonnette, like foreigners more fashionable, “spent their honeymoon in Paris,” for, of course, Frisonnette had to keep on selling Auréole's hats. Home was reached by a narrow staircase, which threatened never to leave off, and, after business

hours, the sweethearts—as ridiculously enchanted with each other as if they had never been married—would exchange confidences and kisses at a little window that was like the upper half of a Punch-and-Judy show, popped among the chimney pots of the slanting tiles as an afterthought.

"It is good to have so exalted a position," said Frisonnette. "There is no one to overlook us nearer than the angels. But I pray you not to mention it to the concierge, or our rent will soon be as high as our lodging. The faint object that you may discern below, my Floromond, is Paris, and the specks passing by are people."

"They must not pass us by too long, however, beloved," said Floromond. "I am a married man and awake to my responsibilities. It would not suit me, by any manner of means, to share you with millinery all your dear little life. More than ever I have resolved to be eminent, and when the plate glass can never separate us again, you shall have dessert twice a day, and a *bonne* to wash the dishes."

"My child," murmured Frisonnette, "come and perch on my lap while I talk wisdom to you, for you are very young, and you have been such a little while in paradise that you have not learned the ways of its habitants. It chagrins you that you cannot give me dessert, and domestics, and a *cinéma* every Saturday night. But because I worship you, my little sugar husband, because every moment that I pass away from you, among the millinery, seems to me as long as the Rue de Vaugirard, I do not think of such things when we are together. To be in your arms is enough. Life looks to me divine, and if I find anything at all lacking in our heaven, it is merely a second cupboard. Now, since you are too heavy for me, you may jump down, and we will reverse the situation."

"I have strange tidings to reveal to you," said Floromond, squeezing the breath out of her; "I adore you, Frisonnette!"

They remained so blissful that many people were of the opinion that Provi-

dence was neglecting its plain duty. Here was a thriftless painter daring to marry a girl without a franc and finding the course of wedlock run as smooth as if he had been a prosperous grocer with branches in the suburbs! The example set to the youth of the Quarter was shocking. And a year passed, and two years passed, and still the angels might see Floromond and Frisonnette kissing at the attic window.

Then one afternoon it happened that a French beauty, hastening along the Rue La Fayette with tiny, uncertain steps, as if her bust were too heavy for her feet, found herself arrested by a toque on view at Auréole's, and, entering with condescension, was still more charmed by the assistant who attended to her. The chance customer was no one less important than the wife of Finot—Finot, the dressmaker; Finot, the famous—and at dinner that night, when they had reached the cheese, she said to the great man:

"My little cabbage, at a milliner's of no distinction I have come across a blonde who could wipe the floor with every mannequin we boast. She is as chic as a model, and as bright as a sequin; she is just the height to do justice to a manteau, her neck would go beautifully with an evening gown, and she has hips that were created for next season's skirt."

"Let her call!" said the great man, adding a few drops of kirsch to his *petit suisse*.

"She would be good business, I assure you," declared the lady. "She talked me into taking a toque more than twice the price of the one I went in for, *me!* Well, I shall have to find a pretext for speaking to her. I must go back and see if there is another hat that I care to buy."

"It is not necessary," replied her husband. "Go back and complain of the one you bought."

So the lady talked to Frisonnette in undertones, and Frisonnette listened to her in bewilderment, not quite certain whether she was twirling to the top of her ladder, or being victimized by a diabolical hoax. And the following

forenoon she passed, by appointment, through imposing portals that often she had eyed with awe. And Finot, having satisfied himself that she had brains, and taste—for they are very wide of the mark who think of his pampered mannequins as elegant mechanical toys—signified his august approval.

Frisonnette went home and described the splendors of the place to Floromond, who congratulated her with a misgiving that he tried to stifle. And later on she told him of the dazzling déjeuners that were provided, repasts that she vowed stuck in her throat because he was not there to share them. And, not least, she sought to picture to him the gowns that she wore and sold. Oh, visions of another world, there were things for which the vocabulary of the Académie Française would be inadequate! Such clothes looked too celestial to be touched. But she was a woman. Though her head was spinning as Finot's mirrors reflected her magnificence, though she was admiring herself illimitably, she accomplished so casual an air that one might have thought that she had never put on anything cheaper in her life.

And, being a woman, she did not suffer from a spinning head very long; she soon became acclimatized.

In the daytime, Frisonnette ate delicate food, and sauntered through stately showrooms, robed like a queen—and in the evening she turned slowly to her little old frock, and supped on scraps in the garret. And now her laughter sounded seldom there. Gradually the contentment that had found a heaven under the tiles changed to a petulance that found beneath them nothing to commend. Her gaze was somber, and often she sighed. And the misgiving that Floromond had tried to stifle knocked louder at his heart.

By and by the little old frock was discarded and thrust out of view, and she wore costumes that made the garret look gaunter still, for, with her increased salary and commissions, she could afford such things. Floromond knew no regret when she ceased to speak of bettering their abode; instead,

his pride had revolted at the thought of astonishing their neighbors on his wife's money; but the smart costumes made her seem somebody different in his eyes, and moodily he felt that it was presumption for a fellow in such a threadbare coat to try to kiss her.

"What a swell you are nowadays!" the poor boy would say, forcing a smile.

And Frisonnette would scoff.

"A swell? This rag!" as she recalled with longing the gorgeous toilets that graced her in the showroom.

One treasure there she coveted with all her soul. It was an ermine cloak, so beautiful that simply to stroke it thrilled her with ecstasy. Only once had she had an opportunity of luxuriating in its folds; under its seductive caress she had promenaded on the Aubusson carpet, for the allurement of an *Américaine* who, after all, had chosen something else. The mannequin used to think that she who possessed it should be the proudest woman in the world, and twice the painter had been awakened to hear her murmuring rhapsodies of it in her sleep.

"If I could sell my 'Ariadne' and carry her away to some romantic cottage among the meadows!" he would say to himself disconsolately. "Then she would see no more of the fangles and flounces that have divided us; she would be my sweetheart just as she used to be."

But the best that he could do was to sell his potboilers, and a romantic cottage among the meadows looked no nearer to his purse than a corner mansion in the Avenue Van Dyck.

That the fangles and flounces had indeed divided them was more apparent still as time went on, so much so that frequently he passed the evening at a café to avoid the heartache of watching her repine. But it was really waste of coppers, for he thought of the change in her all the while, and when he lagged up the high staircase on his return, he was remembering at every step the Frisonnette who formerly had run to greet him at the top.

"You are a devoted companion!" she would remark bitterly as he entered.

"What can you imagine that I do with myself in this hole all the evening while you stay carousing outside?"

"I imagine that you sit turning up your nose at everything, as you do when I am with you," he would answer, hiding his pain.

Then Frisonnette would cry that he was a bear, and Floromond would retort that her own temper had not improved, which was certainly true. And after she had exclaimed that it was false, and stamped her foot furiously to prove it, she would burst into tears, and wonder why she remained with a man who, not content with forsaking her for cafés, came home and calumniated her nose and her temper besides.

Meanwhile, Finot had been contemplating her performances on the Aubusson carpet with rising respect. His versatile mind was now projecting the winter advertisements, and he determined to intrust to his best blonde one of those duties, which, from time to time, rendered the luckiest of his mannequins objects of unspeakable envy to all the rest. Finot's advertisements were conducted on a scale becoming a firm whose annual profits ran into millions of francs.

"*Mon enfant,*" he said to her, "you have been a very good girl. And, though you may think that you are rewarded royally already, as indeed you are"—and here followed an irritating dissertation upon the softness of her job, to which she listened with impatience—"I am preparing a treat for you of the first order. How would it please you to travel for a couple of months or so, a little later on?"

"To travel—I?" she stammered.

"You, and one of the other young ladies. Say, to Berlin, Monte Carlo, Rome?"

"Rome?" ejaculated Frisonnette, who had never dreamed of reaching any other "Rome" than the one on the Métropolitain Railway.

"Mademoiselle Piganne would contrast most effectively with your tints, I think." He screwed up his eyes. "Y-e-s, we could hardly evolve a color scheme more delicious than you and

Mademoiselle Piganne! Whatever capitals we may decide on, you will stay at the hotels of the highest standing. All matters like that you will do best to leave to the judgment of the chaperon in attendance on you both; otherwise you might have the unfortunate experience to find yourself in a hotel not exclusively patronized by the cream of society.

"Your personal wardrobe, for which you will be supplied with from twelve to fourteen trunks, will consist of those creations of my art which approach most nearly to the fulfillment of my ideals, and your affair will be to attract sensational interest in them, while preserving an attitude of the severest propriety. That is imperative, remember! No English or American mother, with her *jeunes filles* beside her, must for a single instant doubt that you are morally deserving of her stare.

"An open carriage in the park where the climate permits, a stage box at the opera when the audience is most brilliant, will, of course, suggest themselves to your mind. But, again, the duenna and the manservant will organize the program as skillfully as they will look the parts! All that will be required of you is a display, brilliant and untiring; the rest will be done by others. Every woman everywhere will instruct her maid to find out all about you, and your maid—an employee of the firm in a humble capacity—will have orders to whisper that you are a princess, traveling incognito, and that your costumes come from me."

Frisonnette could do no more than pant: "I will speak about it at home, monsieur, at once!"

And, because she foresaw with resentment that Floromond's approval would be far from warm, she broached the subject to him very diffidently.

At the back of the little head that Finot's finery had turned, she knew well that if her "bear" betook himself too often to cafés, it was mortified love that drove him to them; so she made haste to tell him:

"It might be the best thing for you to get rid of me for a couple of months.

I should return in a much better humor, and you would find me quite nice again."

"You think so, Frisonnette?" said Floromond, with a sad smile.

"What do you mean?" she asked, paling.

"I mean," he sighed, "that after the 'brilliant display,' it is not our ménage under the tiles that would seem to you idyllic repose. Heaven knows it goes against the grain to beg a sacrifice, but if you accept such luxury, I feel that you would never bear our straits together again. Do not deceive yourself, little one; you would be leaving me, not for two months, but forever!"

Deep in her consciousness had lurked this thought, too, and she turned from him in guilty silence.

"You are fond of me, then," she muttered, at last, "in spite of all?"

"If I am fond of you!" groaned Floromond. "Ah, Frisonnette, Frisonnette, there is no moment, even when you are coldest, that I would not give my life for you. I curse the poverty that prevents me tearing you from these temptations and making you entirely mine once more. If I were rich! It is I who would give you boxes at the opera and carriages in the park. I would wrap you in that ermine cloak, and pour all the jewels of Boucheron's window in your lap."

"I will not go!" she cried, weeping. "Forgive me, forgive the way I have behaved! I have been wicked, yes! But I repent. It is ended—I will not go!"

And all night she was proud and joyful to think that she would not go. It was only in the gray morning that her heart sank to remember it.

"I must decline," she said to Finot hesitatingly. "I have a husband. I—I could not take my husband?"

"*Mon enfant*, your husband would not grudge you the little holiday without him, one may be sure!"

It was as if she were being barred from Eden.

"And the ermine cloak," she faltered; "could I take the ermine cloak?"

The tempter smiled.

"One cannot doubt that, among fourteen trunks, there would be room for the ermine cloak," he told her suavely.

One November evening when Floromond came in, his wife was not there. He supposed that she had been detained in the showroom until he groped for a match—and then, in the dark, his hand touched an envelope, stuck in the box. He trembled so heavily that he seemed falling through an eternity of fear before he could light the lamp.

He read:

I am leaving you because I am frivolous and contemptible. I dare not entreat your pardon. But I shall never make you wretched any more.

When he noticed things again, from the chair in which he crouched, he found that the night had passed and daylight filled the room. He was shuddering with cold. And he got up feebly and wavered toward the bed.

"She did not ponder her words," babbled the aunt, who came to him aghast. "She will return to you! When the two months are over, and she is back in Paris, you will see!"

"She pondered longer than you surmise, and she will never return to me," he said. "And, what is more, a man with nothing to offer can never presume to seek her. No; I have done with illusions—she will be no nearer to me in Paris than in Monte Carlo. Frisonnette's Paris and mine henceforth will be different worlds!"

Floromond lived, without Frisonnette, among the clothes that she had left behind; the dainty things that she had prized had been abandoned now that she was to be decked in masterpieces. They hung ownerless, the peignoir, and *tricot*, and the dresses—the pink, and the mauve, and the plaid—gathering the dust, and speaking of her to him always.

"She has soared above you, damn you!" he would shout sometimes, half mad with misery. "It was you who first estranged us—now it is your turn to be spurned!"

And, tossing sleepless, his fancy followed her; or, pacing the room, he pro-

jected some passionate indictment, which, on reflection, he never sent.

"You should try to work!" his reason told him. "If you worked, you might manage to forget in minutes."

And, setting his teeth, he took palette and brush and worked doggedly for hours. But he did not forget, and the result of his effort was so execrable that he knew that he was simply wasting good paint.

Then, because work was beyond him, and his purse was always emptier, he began to make déjeuner do for dinner, too. And not long after that he was reducing his rations more every day. It was a haggard Floromond who threaded his way among the crowds that massed the pavements when some weeks had passed. The boulevards were gay with booths of toys and trifles now; great branches of holly glowed on the *barraques* of the flower vendors at the street corners; and the restaurants, where throngs would fête the *Réveillon*, and New Year's Eve, displayed advice to merrymakers to book their tables well ahead.

"My rejoicings will be held at home!" said Floromond.

And, during the afternoon of New Year's Eve, it was by a stroke of irony that the first comrade who had rapped at his door since Frisonnette's flight came to propose expenditure.

"Two places go begging for the supper at the Café du Bel Avenir," he explained blithely, "and it struck me that you and your wife might join our party? Quite select, *mon vieux!* They promise to do one very well, and five francs a cover is to include everything but the wine."

"My wife has an engagement that she found it impossible to refuse," said the painter, huddled over the fading fire. "And, as for me, I am not hungry."

The other stared. "There is time enough for you to be hungry by midnight!"

"Yes, that is a fact," assented Floromond; "I may be most inconveniently hungry by midnight. But I am less likely to be scattering five francs. In

plain French, my dear Bonvoisin, if you could lend me a few sous, I should feel comparatively prosperous. I am like the two places at the Bel Avenir—I go begging!"

Bonvoisin looked down his nose.

"I should have been overjoyed to accommodate you, of course," he mumbled; "but at this season, you know how it is! What with the pestilential tips to the concierge and the postman, and one thing and another, I am confoundedly hard up myself."

"All my sympathy!" said Floromond. "Amuse yourself well at the banquet!"

And he sprinkled a little more dust over the dying *boulets* in the grate to prolong their warmth.

Outside, big snowflakes fell.

"The man who has never known poverty has never known his fellow man," he mused. "I would have sworn for Bonvoisin! He has inspired me with an aphorism, however—let us give Bonvoisin his due! And, to take a rosy view of things, turkeys are very indigestible birds; and, since I lack the fuel to cook it, I am spared the fatigue of going out to buy one for my mahogany to-morrow. Really, there is much to be thankful for; the only trouble is to know where it is to be found. If I knew where enough tobacco for a cigarette was to be found, I would be thankful for that, also. How blue the Mediterranean is, to be sure, and how hotly the sun streams! We shall get freckles, she and I! Won't you spare me half of your beautiful sunshade, Frisonnette? Upon my word, I could grow light-headed with a little encouragement! I could imagine that the steps I hear on the staircase now are hers! Fortunately, I have too much self-control to let fancy fool me."

Nevertheless, as he leaned, listening, he was as white as a sheet.

The steps drew nearer.

"I realize, of course, that it is some one for the room on the other side; a moment more; and they will go by," he told himself, holding his breath.

But the steps halted, and a timid tap came.

He stumbled forward.

"It is a child with a bill—the laundress' child! I know perfectly that it is the laundress' child. I do not hope!" he lied, tearing the door open.

And Frisonnette stood there, asking to come in.

"I have run away," she quavered. Her teeth were chattering, and her fashionable coat was as white as a sandwich man's rags. "I should have come long ago, but I was ashamed."

"It is you?" queried Floromond, touching her. "You are not a dream?"

"Every day I have longed to be back with you, and at last I could bear no more. Do you think you might forgive me if you tried?"

"There is a tear on your cheek, and your dear little nose is pink with the cold, and the snow has taken your feathers out of curl," he answered, laughing and crying. "Let us pretend there are logs blazing up the chimney, and we will draw one chair to the hearth and tell each other how miserable we have been, or, better than that, how happy we are!"

But still she clung to him, shivering and condemning herself.

"And so," she repeated, "I ran away. It is a habit I am acquiring! Finot is furious, he has dismissed me. I have no job and no money; I have come back with nothing, my Floromond, but the clothes I stand up in. And—and why do I find you with an empty coal scuttle?"

"*Ma foi!*" he stammered, loath to deepen her distress, "as usual, that imbecile of a *charbonnier* has neglected to fulfill the order."

"He becomes intolerable," she faltered. "Is that why I notice that your tobacco pouch is empty, too?"

"Oh, as for the tobacco pouch," said the young man, "in this ferocious weather I have been reluctant to put on my boots."

"It is natural," murmured Frisonnette.

But her eyes were frightened, and she investigated the cupboard. And when the cupboard was discovered to be as empty as the pouch and the coal scuttle, she rushed to him in a panic.

"You are starving!" she moaned. "You have starved here, while I—*Mon Dieu*, I have not come home too soon!"

"Tut, tut!" said Floromond; "you are trying to pose me for a hero of romance? I have been an idle vagabond, that is all. The cat is out of the bag, though—you have come home, *ma Frisonnette adorée*, and I have nothing for your welcome but my embrace!"

And, thinking of the want that lay before her, he broke down.

"I love you, I love you, Floromond!" she wept.

"I love you," he sobbed; "I love you, Frisonnette!"

Then, in the waning daylight, arose a plaintive cry, the croon of the itinerant wardrobe dealer: "*Chand d'habits!*"

"*Chand d'habits!*" she gasped, and darted to the window. "*Chand d'habits!*" she screamed—and stripped the smart costume from her and stood triumphant in her petticoat.

Before the *marchand's* aged legs had toiled up half the stairs, she was back in the little old frock that had been cast aside.

"Hook me, my Floromond!" And her eager arms were laden, and her frozen hands showered raiment on the floor—the peignoir and *tricot*, and the dresses, the pink and the mauve and the plaid.

"We dine to-night!" she laughed. "Enter, *Chand d'habits!*"

"And, word of honor," observed Floromond, when the clocks of Paris had sounded twelve and the pair sat digesting their *entrecôte*, and toasting their toes, and she was rolling another cigarette for him, "word of honor, you have never looked more captivating than you do now! That frock becomes you marvelously! At the same time, the fine clothes that I have been gobbling lie somewhat heavy on my sensibilities, particularly the fascinating ribbons of the peignoir. If only I had kept my nose to the grindstone! Oh, if only we had something better to expect than this hand-to-mouth existence! Alas, on New Year's morning I cannot give you even a bunch of flowers!"

And at that moment hurrying feet approached the house, young and excited voices were heard below, and what should it prove to be— Well, what it *should* have proved to be was that his "Ariadne" had, in some ingenious way, been purchased for a large sum without his knowledge and that a contingent of the Quarter had arrived to proclaim his affluence; but, as a matter of semisober fact, it was only a posse of exhilarated students wishing

everybody the compliments of the season, and playing "*Le Chemin de l'Amour*" on a trombone.

Still, to-day, as we know, Floromond and Frisonnette have flowers on their own balcony, and three rooms, and chairs that they have actually bought and paid for, to say nothing of the baby. The moral of which is that there are more New Year's Days than one, and that it's never too late to hope. So we may all buck up!



THE OLD MAGIC

I LEFT the sea behind, that I might dwell
 'Mid streets where millions hurry to and fro,
 Where surging crowds and roaring traffic swell
 The city's vast enchantment that I know;
 But still the vagrant breezes whisper low
 Of rolling deeps and spaces wide and free,
 Of reef and shoal and derelict and floe,
 The mightier magic of the surging sea!

I love the city and I love it well,
 Its gold and want, its happiness and woe;
 Sometimes it seems no glamour may excel
 The city's vast enchantment that I know;
 But memory will never have it so—
 She brings again the days "that used to be."
 Once more I feel, as in the long ago,
 The mightier magic of the surging sea.

The city streets—what stories they could tell!
 Touched with the wonder of the passing show,
 The seething life, the loves and hates that spell
 The city's vast enchantment that I know;
 The noise and haste, the myriad lights aglow,
 The plots and schemes, the mirth and mystery.
 And yet I hear, in all the winds that blow,
 The mightier magic of the surging sea.

ENVOY

What thrill it gives, what dreams it can bestow
 The city's vast enchantment that I know!
 But I must follow, when this calls to me,
 The mightier magic of the surging sea.

BERTON BRALEY.



The Man in the Ready-Made Suit by Gouverneur Morris

CHARNOCK was impressed to the point of discomfort by the grandeur that surrounded him. For twenty years, the ups in his life had not been very high, while some of the downs had touched the lowest situations in which man's predisposition to exist combats—without ever winning definite victories or suffering definite defeats—misfortune, poverty, and disease. For a few weeks he had been pretty well “up,” for him. His ready-made clothes were new, his hair was newly cut, he had passed the night in a Turkish bath, and there was money in one of his pockets, and an old watch, newly redeemed, in another.

To remember that he had once been the mold of fashion, at home in great houses, welcome at stage doors, famous for the daring and imagination and good nature, if not the high moral tone, of his exploits, was very difficult. More used now to a younger and a tasteless civilization, the great spaces and the somber tapestries of Gower House depressed him. The servants in livery had a “we-are-better-than-you” look. The mirrors, reflecting—with reluctance, perhaps—his new blue serge suit, an outfit at once above criticism and beneath, seemed to say: “Ready-made.”

For once the Gowers had no guests, and were gathered in a family circle—Nora and Evelyn, Bob and Clarence, and, of course, Gower himself.

Dinner had come on soft feet, and so gone. It had been a short meal of exquisite cooking and much champagne. Charnock was sorry that he had not drunk more; for wine is a great leveler, and he intended shortly not only to rise level with his surroundings, level with Gower and the young cousins, but above them.

They talked of his life, his adventures, not theirs. Only Gower, a bull-heavy, red-faced man, referred occasionally, with harsh bursts of laughter that ended as suddenly as they began, to old times in New York. At such moments, a certain glitter appeared in Charnock's wide-set, light-gray eyes. It was as if the harshness, the loud-mouthed vigor of his cousin offended, even angered, him.

Of Gower's position in society he had assured himself by careful inquiry. It was as secure as that of the sun in the heavens. His insolence was bounded only by space. He could be as insolent as he pleased. He could be as passionate as he pleased, as corroding. He could be drunk and outrageous, and look to all eyes for forgiveness, and to some for admiration. Even his liver and his kidneys seemed to have nothing but forgiveness for him. He had a gross and sonorous health that defied disease and decay. Charnock could not say “Gower has grown older,” but only “He has grown coarser,” or “He has grown more brutal.”

It incensed the man in the ready-made suit, whose gay and debonair proclivities life had so humbled, whose kind and generous impulses poverty and hard luck had so thwarted, to observe into what overbearing, self-satisfied—aye, self-satiated—hands so much money had fallen.

Because his inherited millions were as stones in a Connecticut field, the world did not require of Gower even the good qualities that it requires of a dog. A nation that considers itself intelligent enough to vote even attributed to him a certain mental ability and grasp of affairs. And he, like all men who have inherited vast fortunes, attributed these qualities to himself. And he believed, in that callous organ that pumped his hot and thirsty blood, that if he was stripped of all his properties he would still be a great man, a great power, a leader among men, a delicious terror to women.

"Like to see my guns?" he said abruptly.

They had been talking grouse and Scotland, where Gower rented from year to year a show forest.

"Very much."

Charnock rose, and followed his great cousin out of the room.

The Gower children smiled at each other. Evelyn yawned.

"He's the first man father was ever polite to. Why?"

"Oh, he's father's cousin," said Bob. "They were friends in the old days."

"Father told me something special about him," said Clarence. "It seems that grandpa was down on father at one time, and threatened to leave all his money to his nephew—Bill Charnock, that is. He even told Charnock so. And of course when it came out the other way, Charnock was awfully disappointed, and I guess father feels sorry for him. They say, you know, that he was quite a card—very popular and talented."

"They always say that," said Nora, "about people who passed out a long time ago. When the people come back, you find that they are always dull and ordinary, and humble."

"I don't think Cousin Bill is really humble," said Bob. "Just shy. Once in a while there's a glint in his eye, and then he looks as if he might be quite a cuss when he's roused."

"A regular lion," said Nora.

"A lion in sheep's clothing," said Evelyn.

"In a ready-made, hand-me-down, without the vest, eighteen dollars!" said Clarence.

"Wasn't he even mentioned in the old man's will?" Bob asked.

"It never so much as breathed his name. In fact, grandpa died intestate."

"He did *not*," said Evelyn. "He had a stroke."

"He didn't make a *will*—a *testament*, silly!"

"If he *had*, and had left everything to Cousin Will," said Evelyn, "where'd we have been? Ouch!"

II.

Charnock drew a deep breath as he followed Gower into the gun room. If he was to rise superior to his surroundings, to the thousands of dollars' worth of dark tubes behind the softly sliding glass doors, the time had come. A print—a ferret worrying a rabbit—caught his eye, and evoked in it those glints that his young cousin, Bob Gower, had noticed. For the first time that day the consciousness of his ready-made clothes and shoes passed from him.

It had been very hard to dine in blue serge and tan, so conspicuous beside the broadcloth and pumps, the low necks and French heels, of his cousins. It had been hard to apologize, and to say: "I'm sorry, but I don't own any evening clothes. In my world they aren't worn." He had not added, "In my world the clothes a man dines in are often the clothes he sleeps in."

"I don't want to look at your guns, if you don't mind. I want to talk to you. If you don't mind, I'll ring for whisky."

Gower burst into his short, harsh laugh.

"Then push three times," he said. "Any bell in this house, pushed three times, brings whisky. I tried the front

doorbell on a bet once, and sure enough a man came with a tray."

"I've seen times," said Charnock, "when three hundred cries to Heaven wouldn't produce a thimbleful of water."

A man came with whisky and its perquisites, put them upon a low table, and went.

"Say *when*. The way to enjoy liquor is to pretend that each drink is to be your last—forever."

"When," said Charnock.

He filled the remainder of his glass with soda and drank feverishly. Then he went and stood looking into the empty fireplace. Presently he leaned forward and held his hand near the opening of the flue. He withdrew it, straightened his back, and turned to Gower.

"That chimney always had a strong draft," he said.

"What's that?" Gower snapped, and an impatient, or startled, motion of his hand overturned an empty soda bottle.

"I said that chimney always had a strong draft."

"All the chimneys in this house are scientifically constructed."

"I am reminded," said Charnock, "of a letter I once had from—from a girl. It seemed better to destroy it. There was a fire going in here. I chucked the letter into the flames, and saw it sucked up the chimney, not even singed. I hunted the grounds all night with a lantern. I even hunted over the roofs."

The reds of Gower's heavy face had a black tinge in the shadows. He looked at the toes of his outstretched feet, and shielded his eyes with one hand, as if he found the lights of the gun room too many and too bright.

"I got the letter back," said Charnock, "but it cost me a thousand dollars. Or rather it cost my uncle—your father—that. I had to go to him with the whole story. He was white about it—white."

"Who blackmailed you?"

Gower's sudden harsh, mirthless, overbearing laugh was again in evidence.

"Her brother," said Charnock simply. "He afterward, thanks to very strong

backing, became a member of the United States Senate, proved a bulwark to certain special interests, and died in an odor of great sanctity. Fell, in short, or was pushed from an upper window in a house of ill fame."

Gower's face had grown darker and darker.

"The letter," he said, "was from the woman I married?"

"It was."

"By Gawd!"

He started to his feet, but was met and quelled by a pair of eyes suddenly grown hard as steel.

"There was *no* harm in the letter. Only in the way it was worded. Your wife was good as an angel. And you know it. But she wrote like a fool. Sit down. We are not going to talk about her."

"Well, what are we going to talk about?" said Gower, with a certain lazy insolence.

"About the draft—in the chimney," said Charnock. "Sit down—don't be a fool. Mine is the only loaded gun in the gun room—the only one, perhaps, that has a notch in the stock. Sit down, you overbearing, insolent, pot-bellied swine, and listen."

Charnock, it seemed, was rising superior to his surroundings with a vengeance. His cold, unblinking eyes, his blue, shining automatic, dominated the scene.

"You are drunk," said Gower. "Crazy."

"If I am drunk," said Charnock, "it is with righteousness. If I am crazy—it is you who have made me so—you who have so battered and fattened upon the felony that has made the waste places of the earth my home, its outcasts and unfortunates my companions. I am drunk with knowledge, the knowledge that with all your millions you have done no good in the world, and that I, for all the houndings of poverty and unsuccess, have done a little, and shall not be turned back now from doing more.

"You cannot take your eyes off my little pistol. I return it to its pocket in my ready-made suit of clothes. Do not

forget that it is there. Pour out a drink if you like—it's on the house—the ferret's house— See the ferret—there, over the mantel. He is worrying the life out of the fat rabbit, just as I am going to worry the life out of you.

"This room," he continued, in a milder tone—you might have called it a reminiscent tone—"was uncle's office in the old days. Here he had his papers all in order in the old days, all docketed, all neatly tied with tape. The night he lay dying, the doctors about him, his favorite nephew—though I say it that shouldn't—the servants gathered in the hall, weeping—the night the good old man, the good friend, the more than father, lay dying, this room was broken into by thieves."

Gower had grown pale as death.

"You," said Charnock, "the worthless, lying, check-forging son, who had been forbidden the house and the countenance of the father, aided by a thug, a common thief, a second-story man, broke into this room—"

"Prove it!" cried Gower suddenly.

"Prove it—damn you—prove it!"

"Your friend, the second-story man, is dead," said Charnock; "but it was not for nothing that God brought us two together in the Painted Desert—not for nothing that I shared my water bottle with him, and that he shared the secret of your great wealth with me. Prove it? I can prove nothing in a court of law. The man is dead. But I am not arguing this case before a justice, perhaps of your making, or a jury of your peers—if so be that you are not peerless in wickedness, and arrogance, and bestiality. Nor am I arguing this case before the highest court of all. I am merely *stating* it.

"The lawyers had been in this room—your father's secretary, the men of business—they had left a good fire going. Hearing steps in the hall, you had not time to tear your father's will to pieces; you threw it whole—untorn—into the flames, and, to your horror, you saw it carried, unscathed, uninjured, up the chimney. You, too, have searched the grounds about this house and the roofs

above it for a scrap of paper. You had the right—you were free of the place from which your general rottenness and dishonor had got you driven. There was no will; it was your house—you could enter without a jimmy—you could go by a door.

"At first you came and went with the fear of hell upon you. Each day you expected that the will would be found, and that you would once more be driven forth. But winter came and went, and it seemed to you that the document must surely have perished. Your conscience never troubled you, only the fear of being ousted—pried like some stinking grub from the rich fruit on which you were battenng."

"Always admired your imagination," said Gower.

He had been thinking as rapidly as he could, and had come to the conclusion that since nothing could be proved against him, nothing could be known.

"Why not take this tale of woe to some one who'd enjoy listening to it?" he said. "I don't. Buttonhole some discontented person and do the ancient mariner. You expected a legacy. You were disappointed. Jealousy inspires your tale. Who would take your word—against mine?"

"Ah," said Charnock, "you haven't been rich for nothing! Wealth has taught you something. It is not, however, your words that would be believed over mine—but your money. But you—*you yourself*—believe my jealous imaginings—don't you?"

He had for answer only the rich man's short, ugly laugh.

"You married," Charnock went on. "The girl, goaded by those who should have protected her, went pale to the altar. Her heart was never yours. One day the old gardener to whom she had been kind sent for her. He was dying. He had a paper that he thought she ought to see. He had found it in the garden. He had had it for a long time. He ought, he knew, to have done something about it. But he had been afraid.

"When she had read that paper, your wife hid it. Why? Because she, too, was without honor? No; but because

she was going to have a child. For the sake of her child, she hid that paper—and she kept it hidden for the sake of that child and for the sake of the others that followed. But last year, when she knew that she was going to die, it seemed to her better that her children should starve than that she should go to her Maker with so low a crime upon her soul. So she wrote to me, explaining what she had done, and inclosing the will that you had thrown into the flames. But *that she never* knew—or she couldn't have kept silent all these years.

"Of course," she said in her letter, "if my husband had ever known of this, you would have had your rights. It is all *my* crime—all *my* selfishness."

"Come to the point," said Gower. "What are you driving at?"

"Why," said Charnock, "I have the will."

"You will have to prove that it is not a forgery. It will cost you money to prove that—much money."

He laughed his laugh.

"It will cost nothing. We shall not appear against each other in a court of law. Our court is here. Face to face in this room, we shall settle our differences."

"Your idea is to despoil me of everything?"

"Despoil? That is a hard word to swallow. I shall take nothing from you that is yours—not even your life. In self-defense, I might kill you. Attack me, if you like, and see."

Gower's heavy face worked hard, as if he were chewing some tough substance. That his cousin really had the will, he had no real doubt. That his cousin could really despoil him, he had some doubts; but they were not altogether satisfactory. A compromise of some sort suggested itself as the best way out of the difficulty, and when he spoke to that end it was in a milder and more agreeable voice.

"Come, old man," he said, "you've had a rough deal. What'll you take for the will?"

"You mean how much money?" Charnock smiled sweetly. "My conscience," he said, "is worth far more to

me than any amount of money. Your children have not injured me knowingly—blood—"

"Yes, that's it. After all, you don't want to bring harm and scandal on your own blood."

"Yours and mine?" Charnock laughed melodiously. "I am thinking of the children not because they are cousins—but in spite of the fact. I will not hurt them simply because *her* blood is in them. Understand that. Our noble blue strain does not count with me. No. *My* property shall go intact to her children—"

"After your death," sneered Gower.

"No," said Charnock; "after *yours*."

"If that's all that's troubling you, be assured that according to my will the property goes to them in equal shares. So all this nullabaloo is rather fool work. Who'd I leave the stuff to if not to them?"

"Your wit works slowly," said Charnock. "Your death in the course of nature is too uncertain—too far off, perhaps—to fill my purposes. Do you believe in hell?"

"Do you?"

"I should like to see the question tested—to-night—in your person."

"I suppose you think I'd come flying back to tell you."

"It would be sufficient," said Charnock, "if you found out for yourself that there was such a place. And by my soul, I think you will!"

Gower's fears were rising; for Charnock did not seem to him altogether sane.

"But you're not going to kill me?"

"Not if you will save me the trouble. It is fitting that you should kill yourself. First, you are not fit to live; and, second, you know it. I shall leave my little automatic with you. I shall join the young people, and when I hear a shot, I shall burn the will."

"How do I know you will?"

"Because you *know* that I will."

The steely eyes glinted with the firm light of unassailable honor.

"Show it to me."

"There, then! Is that it—or isn't it?"

As if finally acknowledging defeat, Gower gave one troubled look at the document, and allowed his head to fall forward on his breast. Then, treacherous, quick as lightning, he snatched at the will, and gave a sharp cry as if he had been stung by a wasp. His hand had closed—not on destructible paper—but on a tube of cold steel.

"I was naturally quicker than you," said Charnock, "mentally and physically. Circumstances have developed the faculty in me and diminished it in you. Here, take the pistol." He threw it onto the tray among the glasses and the bottles. "It's cocked. Put the muzzle in your mouth—and pull the trigger. I shall expect to hear a shot in about five minutes."

It occurred to Gower to seize the weapon and turn it upon Charnock—but the fateful, untroubled, almost smiling glint in the pale-gray eyes deterred him. Furthermore, it flashed upon him that Charnock was so insane as to believe that, left alone with the pistol, he, Gower, would actually make a suicidal use of it. The idea was so ridiculous that when the door of the gun room had closed upon the figure of Charnock, the wealthy malefactor was actually able to laugh.

He took out his watch, and laid it on the table beside the pistol.

"Five minutes be it," he said, and poured a stiff drink of whisky with a hand that still shook a little.

III.

It was a more efficient, a more presentable Cousin Bill Charnock who rejoined the young Gowers in front of the big fire in the living room. His thoughts were no longer upon his ready-made clothes. He was no longer abashed and humble. He began to talk as he entered the room. He told them that they made a pleasant picture about the fire. He told them, leaning on the back of a chair and looking into the flames, that all the most romantic and exciting incidents of his life were connected with fires.

"Not conflagrations, you know, but

fires under control—fires for cooking—or for warmth—or for destroying papers."

He drifted into a story, coming in front of the chair on which he had been leaning and sinking into its leather depths.

"Once," he said, "I was a man of war; but there weren't enough men of war on our side. Avocado, the capital of the little republic, was so hemmed in by the rebels that it became necessary to transfer the seat of government and the state archives to the summer capital—a town of infinitesimal size, but formidable strength—in the mountains. As aid-de-camp, I accompanied the president in his—we called it change of base—the enemy called it a retreat.

"After three days in which we had very little to eat and nothing to keep us going but the president's gifts as a joker and a story-teller, we were captured while trying to cross a swollen river. Our captors didn't know who we were, for we were not in uniform, and if we could get rid of certain incriminating papers which had been divided among us, there was a chance of prolonging our lives until our party should be in the ascendant.

"We were not searched immediately. The president rode off between two men—talking gayly and making them laugh. The rest of us followed, each between two of our captors with drawn swords. In crossing a stream, the president's sword and scabbard, of which he had not been deprived, came loose and fell into the water. Some attempt was made to recover them, but the mud was deep. The little man—he made you think of a quadruped—made a great fuss over his loss. I could hardly keep from laughing aloud, for I knew that the blade of his sword was but six inches long, and that the space thus left empty in the scabbard was stuffed with incriminating papers.

"But presently, though he had other papers scattered about his person, he was laughing again and joking and telling stories.

"That night about the camp fire, captors and captives, we listened for hours

to stories that the little president told. Oh, the true romance sat on that man's shoulders! Stories tragic and gay, dramatic, wholesomely indecent, pathetic, and comic, fell from his lips in a steady stream of bright coloring and miraculously chosen words. He held us fascinated, spellbound, in the ring of light.

"Cigars and cigarettes kept going out, which, perhaps, among Spaniards, is a greater tribute to an artist than hand-clappings and bravos. In particular, the president's cigar kept going out. I can see him now—talking all the while—look here and there for something with which to light it. Finally he begins to feel at random in his pockets, comes out presently with a piece of paper, lights it at the fire, lights his cigar—and sees the remainder of the paper burn to ashes.

"One by one, piece by piece, talking all the time, he destroyed all the tangible evidence against him that was in his pockets. And, under cover of his talk, the rest of us followed suit. If our lives hadn't seemed to hang upon the destruction, it would have been comic. Our captors were farm boys—yokels—not stupid, but easily taken in. I remember I had one paper——"

Here Charnock reached into his pocket and pulled out his uncle's will.

"——as big as this. I had rid myself of everything else."

He sat well forward on the edge of his deep chair, and, his hands close to the fire, began nonchalantly to roll the document between his thumb and forefinger, beginning at one corner, into a sort of long lighter.

"I don't know why, but my nerves began to go to pieces. I couldn't stick the thing into the flames. It seemed to me as if I had to wait until something happened that would draw all eyes in another direction——"

"What was that?"

Of the five, Charnock alone did not show any concern. He leaned still farther forward, and thrust the will into the flames, where it was almost instantly consumed.

Bob had risen to his feet.

"It sounded like a pistol shot," he said. "What the deuce——"

"Hope," drawled Evelyn, "father knew it was loaded. Better go see if it's anything——somebody."

But there was no need. Gower, his face at once evil and sheepish, thrust open a door and came in. He carried Charnock's pistol in one hand.

"Did you hear a shot?" he said. "Damned newfangled weapons! I might have hurt myself."

"What happened, father?"

"Oh, I almost had an accident."

His eyes, very watchful for him, were on Charnock. This one rose lazily, his back to the fire, his hands thrust into the pockets of his ready-made coat.

"I almost had an accident, too," he said, smiling. "I was telling these young people a story. And in my excitement I almost burned a valuable paper."

"Almost?" Gower's voice trembled a little.

"Yes," said Charnock slowly. "The paper I actually burned was a facsimile."

A kind of black rage rose in Gower's face. He had put his cousin down for a simpleton; he had thought, by firing a shot, to accomplish the destruction of the will. He lurched forward, making with his pistol hand a gesture that may or may not have been threatening.

"You——" he began.

But the cold glint in Charnock's eyes cut him short.

"I had forgotten to tell you young people," said Charnock, "that when I was captured, they took the revolvers from my holsters. But I was never a man to depend upon the obvious. And I had in reserve, in my jacket pockets, a pair of forty-one caliber derringers, old style. I was so expert with these that I could have shot through the cloth of the pockets and killed my man at——oh, the distance from me to your father. Better carry that automatic back to the gun room, hadn't you, before you have a real accident?"

He laughed cheerfully, while Gower, without a word, turned and went back to the gun room.

"Guess father really frightened himself," said Clarence.

"Oh, *he* always was a dub about fire-arms," said Bob. "But say, Cousin Bill, what happened afterward? You were just going to burn your last paper, and——"

Charnock was smiling brightly.

"Want to hear the end of the story?"

"We sure do!"

"Well, then——" he began, and seated himself once more, lazily, in the deep leather chair.

In the gun room, Gower, still holding the automatic, stood looking at the old print in which the little ferret was worrying the life out of the fat rabbit.



PRINCESS NICOTINE

TO airy Princess Nicotine,
 By poets long time sung,
 Though it is easy to be seen
 That you're no longer young,
 I love you none the less, my heart,
 Though in the ancient days
 Sir Walter turned his lyric art
 To crowning you with praise.

For you are still as young and fair,
 As in those other times
 When grateful poets everywhere
 Poured forth their loyal rhymes
 To prove you queen of sweet surcease
 From trouble and from woe—
 A sort of Hebe, bringing peace
 To mortals high and low.

I love you for the kindly veil
 You cast o'er ugly things;
 And for the hints that never fail
 To give the spirit wings,
 As when you hover o'er a scene
 By worry sore beset,
 And 'neath an opalescent sheen
 Envisor all regret.

But most of all, dear Nicotine,
 I've loved you since that day
 When, in a nook of leafy green
 And roses hid away,
 I found—*my Polly blowing rings*
Of incense rich and rare,
As blithely as the bird that sings
His heart out on the air!

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.



WE were sitting amid the Oriental magnificence of the Alcazar palm room—just Marie and I. In a far-off corner, a string orchestra was playing selections from "Faust," and, if there is one thing that urges me to sentimentality, it is "Faust." The waiter had come, had bent an attentive ear, and had gone away. About us was the subtle perfume for which the Alcazar is renowned, and while we waited for Pierre, I studied the perfect face of the woman opposite me, and permitted my fancy to roam unbridled.

Marie is a tall, flowerlike person, who makes you think of anemones and moonlight nights on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. She has slender, transparent hands, and her skin is like gossamer and the color of ivory. I can watch Marie's expressive face for hours, when she will permit it, and find in each moment a new surprise, a fresh thrill, and another cause for wonderment at the skill of Mother Nature in fashioning such a flesh-and-blood miracle as Marie is.

I doubt if there are two other girls in all New York who combine Marie's equable disposition, charm of manner, and perfection of person. You can see that I am somewhat enthusiastic about this lady, so I shall desist and go along with the business in hand.

Whenever I am honored, I take Marie to this flamboyant palace of food, and there we dine and chat and laugh at each other's jests like two very good friends, as, indeed, we are. I try my best to avoid growing sentimental, be-

cause Marie detests it, but now and then I falter in my determination. Marie is a tyrant, but she is a kind despot, and there is really only one subject upon which we cannot agree.

Marie likes Pierre.

I do not. Pierre is a decent enough fellow, but I have never been able really to like him, and I presume I am at fault.

Marie says it is an affectation of mine. Perhaps so. At any rate—and I am utterly positive of this—it is not jealousy of Marie that awakens discord within me at the mere thought of Pierre.

And now we were sitting at the table waiting for Pierre to come, and Marie was gazing at me with her inscrutable eyes that penetrate into my soul.

"I wonder," I said reminiscently, toying with the stem of my glass, "if I have ever told you of the great event in my life, Marie?"

"Probably," she smiled in answer. "You have told me many things."

"But this," I insisted, "was really the great event. I doubt if you have ever heard it from me. Pierre is late again, and, as we cannot dine until he comes, perhaps you will listen to my story."

"As you like," she answered carelessly. And when Marie is casual, she is curious.

"It began a long time ago," I continued. "Like all great events, it was a love affair, and I am a man who has been strangely free from amorous entanglements. I have had but two in all these years, and these two were very close to each other.

"There was one called Rosalie.

Beauty in woman is a marvelous thing, and Rosalie was a beautiful woman. I shall not describe her for you, because you would smile; but it is enough to say that I met her and fell a mad victim to her charms. She was on the stage, and there were many who sought the benediction of her smile, yet I was the favored one.

"Her family was poor and of low degree. Had Rosalie been unbeautiful or lacking in talent and charm, she would have grown to womanhood amid sordid surroundings. She would have worn dowdy clothes, and her conversation would have reeked of the vulgarities of those about her. In the end, she would have married the man who brought the ice. Rosalie had no ancestry, but one forgot the past and thought only of this beautiful creature when she was near."

"And you loved this lady of the footlights?" Marie yawned.

"Desperately; madly, and beyond all reason. I sat nightly in the theater, looking over the bald head of the orchestra leader, and staring in complete fascination as Rosalie moved back and forth upon the stage. I hovered at the stage door with a motor car until she came. We visited the great restaurants nightly after her performance, and were gazed upon with envious eyes. Rarely a day passed that I did not surprise my idol with some new gift. I wrote poems about her and to her. I persuaded my newspaper friends to write adulatory articles pointing out her talent.

"Then I asked her to marry me, and to quit the stage, and, to my surprise, she consented. Plenty of money was mine through the generosity of an indulgent parent, and my home was beautiful, and furnished in excellent taste. My reputation was beyond assault, and in all ways I was an eligible bachelor.

"Rosalie was in no great hurry to wed, so the date of our marriage was not set. We were content to drift along in idle bliss; I secure in the thought that this gorgeous butterfly was my own, and that, in good time, she would be my wife. I forgave her for her East Side parents and the occasional lapses from good breeding that crept into her man-

ner and speech. Mine, Marie, was the blind, overwhelming love that comes to a man who loves for the first time. I am not boring you?"

"I am intensely interested," Marie nodded.

"And now comes grim tragedy stalking upon the heels of sweet romance," I continued. "At a fashionable ball I danced with a girl, talked with her, and gazed into the violet depths of her eyes. Before the evening ended, the uneasy feeling obsessed me that I was falling in love anew, and with this fair maid of the elect; for, even as my Rosalie was one of the lowly and poor born, so was my dancing partner a rose of the rich, a peony of the proud, an amaranth of the aristocracy.

"At first I fought against the inclination, thinking of that other one to whom I had bound myself, but love—who can argue successfully against it? What is loyalty? Need I go into details? If I had fallen deeply in love with Rosalie, I was now upon the verge of a passion so intense and flaming that the first love was a mere cold glow—a nothing in comparison.

"The girl knew nothing of my thoughts that disturbing night, but I can never forget the sweet graciousness of her manner, the delicate flush of her cheek, the wavy ringlets in her brown hair, and the soft drawl of her voice. I was bound in chains to her, though she knew it not.

"I saw her again. Our friendship blossomed and flowered like the fairest of earth's buds. She was as innocent and unaffected as Rosalie was sophisticated, and there was that about her that forced a clear recognition of the generations and generations of blue blood that had produced her.

"My attitude toward her was more that of an awed pilgrim worshipping at the shrine of some saint than a lover at the feet of his adored one.

"And wonder of wonders, Marie, this creature of the stars welcomed my timid love, received me cordially, smiled upon my hesitating advances, and, in the course of time, into her eyes there came the soft light that no man can mistake!

"She loved me. One night I told her. She held out her hands to me, and I took her in my arms, and our lips met in the first, never-forgotten kiss.

"You may regard this, Marie, as shocking behavior, and unworthy of a manly man, but I can only say that if I had first met my goddess, a million million Rosalies might have come and gone and left me cold.

"But, while I loved and was loved in return, all was not serene. The parents of this daughter of wealth frowned upon her increasing favor toward me, and they informed her very unmistakably that they had other plans for her future, which did not include me. We had a number of heart-breaking interviews, my beloved and I. She was a dutiful daughter. She loved her father and mother, and until now their lightest wish had been her command. I urged her to marry me, but she counseled delay, hoping that the paternal edict might be overcome.

"I can remember so well what followed. Rosalie had been absent from New York on a theatrical tour, and was now returning to the city. I had determined not to write her of the change that had taken place, but to go to her like a man and tell her that we could never marry; that a mistake had been made, and that it would be the part of wisdom to recognize the error before it was too late.

"I left my home early in the evening for the theater where Rosalie was to play at the opening of a new comedy, and during the ride downtown I tortured myself with mental pictures of the agony I was about to inflict. I saw Rosalie flying into a passionate rage, weeping at my feet, threatening, pleading with me to return to her and disavow my real love.

"At the theater door, I asked for her, and one of the men whom I knew well led me aside and broke the news as gently as he could. Rosalie had fled that afternoon—had gone away with the bald-headed leader of the orchestra, and they were to be married in Pittsburgh as expeditiously as possible.

"Can you not see the joy that overwhelmed me, Marie? I strode home upon billows of thin air. I whistled happily. My heart beat a pæan of bliss. There remained no obstacle between me and my beautiful aristocrat—except her parents, and I believed that time would efface their hostility. Do I interest you?"

"Hugely," Marie murmured, sipping her water and glancing toward the doors through which Pierre would presently enter.

"That was indeed a night of happenings and events," I went on. "Returning to my rooms, I flicked on the electric, and saw upon the black leather cloth of my table a square of white. I picked it up wonderingly. It was a letter from the sole occupant of my thoughts. It was the most pathetic little screech that ever slipped into an envelope. Tear drops marked its lines, and the dear writing tottered across the page in an access of sadness.

"She told me hurriedly that the blow had fallen. Her remorseless parents, no longer blind to her great love for me, had acted with dispatch. They had sailed that afternoon for Europe, taking my adored one with them, and they were to be gone a long time—years, if it were necessary. They would trust to time to kill her love for me, and she could tell me little of their plans because they had not intrusted them to her. I walked back and forth in my rooms, reading and rereading that pitiful little note, trying to decide what would be best to do, and cursing my ill luck.

"In the short space of twelve hours I had lost the two women—the only two women I had ever loved. One had gone away, and I was grateful. The other had left me, and I was desolate. Was that tragedy, Marie? I ask you. Was that the fire of a just retribution poured upon the head of a luckless being? What should I do?"

"What did you do?" Marie murmured softly.

"That very night I began packing my trunks. Within four days, I had sailed for Europe, and, during the next six

months, I trailed my angel and her fleeing parents. At Lisbon, I was but two days behind them. As I entered Alexandria, they were passing from the north end of the city in a motor car. I arrived in Calcutta on the noon train, and they had departed at nine in the morning.

"I shall not weary you with the troubles of my pursuit. They fled through Europe, Asia, and Africa, and I clattered at their heels, secure in the reflection that they knew nothing of the man behind them.

"In Rome, the family paused, took up their abode at the Grand Hotel, and prepared for a prolonged stay. The day after their arrival found me, dusty and weary, emerging from a sleeping car in the Italian capital, and that afternoon, wandering down the Via Nazionale, I came face to face with her for love of whom I had traveled half the world over.

"We greeted each other unrestrainedly, to the confusion of the passing populace. She wept happily upon my shoulder, and I comforted her with the assurance that never again would we be parted."

"And then?" asked Marie, with bright eyes.

"We were married that afternoon," I answered. "It was the fifth day of September, five years ago to-day, which is probably why I am thus prosily regaling you with my story. She eluded her tyrant father, escaped with me, and, under a golden canopy, we were wed. It was a most beautiful wedding. I shall never forget the day."

Marie laughed, and looked up. Pierre had come in, and was approaching our table.

"Very well told, indeed!" Marie smiled. "Excellent!"

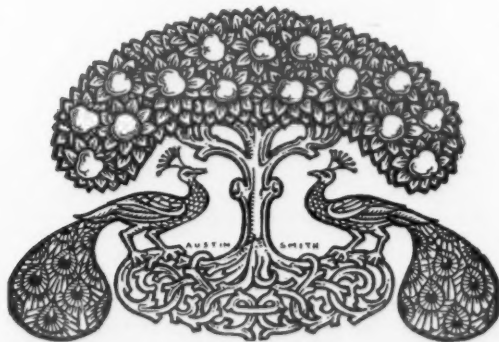
She raised her dainty finger tips, implanted a kiss upon them, and brazenly blew it to me across the table in reward for my story.

"That letter you found upon your table," she said dreamily, "took hours and hours to write and a great deal of thought. But it accomplished its purpose."

Again she threatened me with a wafted kiss as Pierre, our waiter, came up with the oysters.

And why shouldn't she?

Marie is my wife.





SIX months' imprisonment! For both!"

The words crashed into Luella's brain with a force that stunned her. She held out her hands to the judge, and then stumbled forward. When the mist cleared, she turned to the young lover who shared her sentence, seeking his look of sympathy and deathless love. But he, too, had all but collapsed at the sentence. So it was only her husband's form that met her gaze. His vast bulk towered above her. His eyes were jeering and triumphant.

It was the old story—the story that is epic poetry when the names are Paolo and Francesca, and sordid prose when they are James Brown and Luella Smith! Just the story of a girl, given by a stern father to a stern contemporary; then three years of drudgery and subjection; and then the sudden sunshine of young companionship, and of a strange, new, hidden joy, culminating in one passionate, unguarded hour—the hour of her fall!

Neither boy nor girl—he was twenty-two, she nineteen—was skilled in deception. The mature husband, who was, quickly knew all. In a blind fury, regardless of his name, he invoked the strong arm of the law to avenge his wrongs. And now, exultant, he strode from the court, after hearing with satisfaction the sentence for guilty wife and guilty lover:

"Six months in the penitentiary!"

Luella had no fault to find with her treatment in the penitentiary. Her prettiness, her sweetness, the dazed condition that lasted for some days after the trial, won the kindness of the matron, who averred that she was "not a bad lot." Her work was made as easy as possible, and she was sheltered from contact with her fellow prisoners—as far as possible. She could not be altogether protected from much that left terrible, searing marks upon her after-life. Some things seem so burned in on one's heart and brain by the mere knowledge of their existence that the Lethe that can wash one clean from them has yet to be discovered. But, looking back, later, on those six months in the penitentiary cell, Luella knew that they had not been the hardest of her life. The first six months with William Smith had been very much harder!

But the dreariness of it all! The monotony of the routine, the hardships of the coarse food, and the bare cell! Above all, the sudden lengthening of the days! Six months must always seem a considerable period of time to those who have lived only thirty-eight times six months; but now, to poor Luella, the days stretched into vast, level deserts, to be slowly and painfully crossed. To her, the nights seemed peaceful little lakes, on which she slept; the mornings saw her scarred and aching feet, bare, upon another desert.

But just as earth's most barren

wastes have a sun, so Luella's prison life had one illuminating joy—the thought of the moment when, the last of the deserts crossed, she would be free again, and would meet Jim outside. One second only, as they were led away from the courtroom, they had been near enough for his whisper:

"I'll be there, girlie! I'll take care of you!"

And she would need his care. Under her heart lay his child.

Slowly, very slowly, the desert days went by; slowly, but surely. At last a greater number lay behind her than before. She began to count them. They slipped, with increasing speed, from ninety to eighty, from eighty to seventy. When they had diminished to forty-nine, she began to count them by weeks—seven, six, five, *four!* The sunlight streamed upon her in pure gold. Three! The radiant vision of that life with Jim beyond the prison gates almost blinded her. Two! Her heart seemed bursting with happiness. She began to sing—vague little snatches of song, soon hushed into frightened silence—at her work. One! Then a sudden terror of everybody and everything made the days a torment. She might offend the matron, she might break some unsuspected rule, and her sentence be lengthened. Each day passed in safety saw her sobbing out hysterical prayers and thanks as she knelt by her cot.

And now it was but a question of days. Seven, six, five—no one offended, no enemies made, no rules broken. Freedom in sight—freedom, and Jim! Some of her fellow prisoners whose terms expired when hers did were in bitter anxiety as to even their first meal. She was very sorry for them. She had no fear. Jim would be waiting there for her; Jim would cover her quickly from prying eyes, and lead her away to safety and love. She had forgotten her husband. She was fast forgetting that she had ever been his wife. It was Jim's child that she would bear; it was Jim's true wife she would be.

Two days more. She now began to count the hours. They slipped from

forty-eight to thirty-six; from thirty-six to twenty-four; from twenty-four to twelve. There came a night of unimaginable bliss, when she laughed at her cot as she lay down on it.

"The last night!" she said, and smiled as she fell asleep.

Through the lagging and creeping hours and minutes of that day of freedom she lived, but she never knew how. She was given her own clothes, and her trembling fingers could hardly array her in them. And then at last—dear God, at last!—the moment came. She, with several others, was led through passages and corridors that seemed interminable to a vast courtyard. Crossing that, the prisoners faced great gates that slowly swung apart.

Some of them had friends, but not many. One was rearrested by a waiting officer, and Luella shuddered at his cries and oaths. She hardly dared look about her as she waited for Jim's hand upon her arm.

Then, as she felt nothing, she lifted timid eyes, and glanced furtively up and down the street. There was no man in sight. Jim had not come.

Luella felt a terror, a crushing, blinding, killing terror, that made her sink down upon the hard earth. She had never once dreamed of this! Through all her looking forward, she had seen Jim standing there, waiting for her, believing that as inevitable as the rising of the sun.

Jim had not come!

But a faint smile, sad and quivering, yet still the sign of a new-born hope, curled her lips. How could he come? His sentence had been identical with hers. He was but this moment released, and was probably hastening, as fast as love could carry him, to where she waited. She took a few slow, timid steps down the street, and sank upon a friendly doorstep. He would not be very long—not a moment longer than he could help.

"Are you Luella Smith?"

The voice that put the question was very sweet and refined. Luella lifted her eyes and saw a young woman, a

gentlewoman, simply but elegantly dressed, looking down at her with kind eyes.

"Yes," said the girl, and she noticed that her own voice was hoarse from the prison silence. Then she pulled herself up eagerly, the girl helping her tenderly. "Ma'am, have you come from Jim?"

The girl's answering smile was like an angel's, it was so radiant with benevolence.

"Yes," she replied; "James Brown sent me to you."

"Is he sick?" cried Luella, in alarm.

"No; quite well," her visitor reassured her. "Come with me. I have a taxi round the corner."

Luella obeyed, and waited patiently until the driver had cranked up and started.

"Please, ma'am," she implored, "tell me. If Jim isn't sick, why didn't he come for me?"

The lady took her hand and patted it. "James Brown has become a good man," she said softly. "He was quite converted in the penitentiary. At first, it was rather hard to make him understand that he must not see you again, but at last he did, when I told him that I would take care of you. We have sent him to South America," she went on, her sweet face lighted with the triumph of her good deed, "so that he might be quite out of temptation. And we will take care of you, and get you a nice place in the country, where you can work out your own salvation, only we will always take an interest in you, and hold out a helping hand. Is there?"—she lowered her voice, but spoke with keen and eager interest—"is there to be a child?"

But she received no answer, for Luella, in her corner of the taxi, had fallen into a dead faint.



INDIAN SUMMER

THERE came a darkness on the autumn hills
That suddenly hid the glory of the leaves,
The rich, high tapestries of the earth's room,
Hung by a mad magician in the night.

Hushed rains descended, and a veil of mist
Shut from my eyes the crimson and the gold,
Imperial purple and embroidered red
That wrapped the walls of God. Beauty was lost
To one who craved it in that solemn time,
The sad year's long, slow-marching afternoon.

Then lo! I saw a lamp at the valley's door,
And a young girl with summer's vanished smile
Passed down the singing corridors, and blazed
With suns miraculous the vested hills.

I followed her, strange ghost of the lost June,
Until the kingly pomp of autumn fell
In tragic ruin up and down the world.

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.



A
BENEFIT PERFORMANCE
BY
Leo Crane

ALTHOUGH he had his cane, a sturdy piece of stick, he came down the steps of the house with timid, almost shambling, feet, and, when he had gained the pavement, he sighed, as if it had been an effort. He glanced about him as one not quite sure of all that he sees, an old man, shoulders bent a little, white hair touching a frayed collar, hands gripping the stick tremulously.

He seemed the straggler of an older school. The linen of his shirt bosom puffed from a waistcoat that should have graced the evening rather than his morning walk, and that evidently would serve for both. He passed down the street, feebly trying to force a stride into his slowing steps.

The house from which he had come was very like himself. Once an exclusive brownstone, imposing and aloof, it was now the shelter of all that is shabbiest in boarding places and studios. From its open second-floor windows came the shrill notes of one who would never sing in opera; above, flapped dirty curtains, disclosing a photographer's retouching shelf; the stoop was chipped and dust-covered, the vestibule dingily uninviting. It was a mean street.

The old man seemed apart from these things—cleaner, more refined in habit and manner—so far removed that scarcely any one of the inhabitants paid him respect or attention. Some believed him very poor, others whispered that he was a miser. He was neither. He was simply a lonely old man who lived three flights up in one of the shabbiest of boarding houses, and who resorted to all

manner of transparent tricks to keep his wants secret and his shoulders erect.

As long as the Mackings had lived, he had not a care—for had he not served that family, father and son, throughout its history? Why, he could remember the first performances at Macking's old house, in the forties; and far more accurate than the records held by those upstarts who had taken over the theater were his recollections of plays and players of the past. Of course, he deplored the decadence of the drama, and despised new fashions in acting. His standards were "Venice Preserved" and the school of Edwin Forrest. Upon such subjects he would wax eloquent, beginning eagerly, only to grow irritable always.

"There is no acting these days." A vivid flush of color would start to his pallid face. "Why, my boy, the actors are all dead—and a good thing for them, too, else they might find themselves ashamed, and—out at elbows." He would shake his gray head sadly. "And the staleness of acting, the grace, the charm of it are all gone. Manners, too, lost with it. Oh, it is pitiful to me! I can recall them well, the fine old ones—the Booths, father and son. In those days we had performances, and lines superior to the scenery—such lines!—full, resounding, from men who could declaim. To-day! Balderdash—esoteric rot—stuff and nonsense, all of it!"

And he would strike the ground impatiently with his stick, and move away, muttering, lost in a maze of memories.

He was not an actor; he was a critic who had missed his way.

The last fifteen years of his service, after his beard had become silvery, he had been the doorman at the Macking Theater. He had taken tickets with so gracious a dignity that it had seemed an honor to have bought them, and the card of a reporter had been honored as calmly as the coupons of a box. He had swung the baize-covered doors open with a smile and an almost imperceptible bow that the ladies had always acknowledged winningly.

The city's best had gone to Macking's. Not to be known there had been to be unknown indeed. And the old man had known every one, nearly; while those whom he had not recognized had never been able to complain of his manner. Few could recall when he had not stood at the door, a "King Lear" at the portal, his white hair and fine face like a cameo against the velvet curtains that hung at the entrance from the lobby.

"As well dispense with the orchestra and Billy Graham," John Macking had said once, when asked to get a younger man as doorkeeper.

John Macking had valued him as a property, just as he had the chair in which Kean had sat and the silver tankard that had served Macready. And he had loved the old man, too, as a legacy from his father, the John Macking of stock-company fame, whose bust in the lobby they wreathed once every year with immortelles.

And so, even after his usefulness was spent, they had kept him. The first night of each new season had seen him on hand early, awaiting the rise of the curtain with an eagerness that he had tried to veil beneath crusty criticisms. It had been his life—that of the theater—and he knew nothing else. The mellow flush of the drop when the front lights glowed up warmed his aging heart; and the soft sweep of melody in the season's first overture sent the blood pulsing through him once again, as it had long ago, when—

"You see," John Macking would say, "the old man had ambition once, and was in love, too. You wouldn't think that of the old beggar, would you? But

he was, and they say with Mrs. Gimble, too, the famous Mrs. Gimble. Gad, how she went after the dagger scene! He sent her roses—fact!—and she sent them back. After which, he had some words with the other end of the Gimble family. A stage-door Johnny, you say? Well, not exactly; the breed wasn't known then, and—you see, he loved her. Oh, it was a rare joke!

"His ambition was to act. He developed it all in one season, had his chance, and failed. Too bad! Strangely, too, one failure cured him. There was a young woman in the cast, a perfect hoyden, who spread the joke about his roses and Mrs. Gimble. Lidy Darnell! She made the old man a laughingstock—but he was a young man then. Father told me of it, and he used to laugh—Lidy Darnell? She failed, too, for the theater was a drafty place in those days, and she didn't last out the season—"

Once the old man had overheard John Macking at this tale, but he had said nothing. He had served the Mackings, father and son, faithfully, and their playhouse had been his home. He had been able to forgive a lack of understanding. The famous Mrs. Gimble! What a joke it had been, to be sure, and even the call boys telling it! He had forgiven it all long ago, though a bit of sentiment forbade his speaking of Mrs. Gimble—the famous Mrs. Gimble—a lithe woman, like a swaying reed, about whom swept the splendor of a golden voice. He had thought of her often, as he had shakily handled the coupons, wondering of the cruel circumstances that had sent his bouquet into her hands.

As long as the Mackings had lasted, he had not had a care; but now that the family was scattered, and John Macking dead, even as his father before him, the theater had come into other hands. The old man had been the only property not retained by the new management. His dismissal had been a tragedy—to him.

"Your services are no longer required," the new treasurer had said.

"Eh! But——" the pensioner had stammered.

"Can't you see that you're of no use to us? We must have younger men. It's time for you to retire. This is a new era."

He had rested his cane upon the ledge of the box office, and had begun impressively:

"Young man! Booth said to me once that——"

The treasurer had lifted his perky head:

"Booth! Who was he?"

The old man had had no answer sufficient for this staggering inquiry. He had made a good exit, well restrained.

And now for three years he had eked out an existence from his meager savings, in the shabbiest of boarding houses, in a mean street, forgotten by his own world, but sustained by the vigor of his pride and the knowledge that he once had lived.

Each weekday morning, he walked over the dozen blocks to the theater. It was a habit that he could not break, and it seemed to satisfy his belief in the old order of things. The house, with its quaint white façade, reassured him as to his own brave days. Sometimes, when Grandley or Morton Fenn graced a cast, in the minor parts to which the old actors had descended, he would stint himself for an admission; and always he wondered if in former years his manner had seemed as curt to others as that of the new doorman seemed to him.

For the past two weeks, however, he had not gone for his usual walk. He had been sick, and was shaky even now; but the landlady had threatened to send him to a hospital, to avoid which terrible happening he had bravely simulated a recovery. No newspaper had come his way. He felt like a traveler revisiting old scenes as he struggled downtown. Across traffic-crowded streets he hurried dreamily, hoping that his premonition of sad things would prove unfounded.

Now he turned a corner, and neared the white front of the playhouse. He sighed with relief, but immediately afterward his pace quickened, for he could see that something strange was going

on. A pile of rubbish was heaped outside the doorway, and the clatter of much knocking came from within the building. A thin cloud of plaster dust swung its veil in the summer sun. As he hurried forward to learn what it all meant, a placard caught his eye, and he paused, breathless, to read:

This theater property will be replaced on or before August seventeenth by a modern office building of twenty stories. Plans on view at the Regent Hotel.

PRESTON & BROWN, Contractors.

The old man gasped pitifully. He read the card a second time.

August seventeenth—twenty stories—replaced——

Macking's Theater to go! A flood of poignant recollections rushed upon him, and his eyes grew dim. He rubbed them clear to read the notice once again. Macking's Theater, which had seen Booth's *Hamlet*, and heard Minnie Hauk! A modern office building for lawyers, and real-estate agencies, and money lenders! What would old John Macking have said to that?

Trembling with an indignation that he could scarcely control, he watched the gang of workmen. Amid flippant talk and laughter, they were ripping out the cream-and-gold decorations of the lobby. The plaster bust of old John Macking, dust-covered on its shelf, appeared to survey the wreck all too calmly.

"Stand aside, old un!" called a workman with a plank.

"Look out, gov'nur!" and another jostled him.

He raised his cane as if he would strike them. These ignorant vandals were destroying his home, his world, his belief in himself.

Dismayed, stupefied, he tottered out of their way and crossed the street. He stood opposite the old house all that morning. A twenty-story office building! A thousand years could not endow it with a memory. And Macking's! Slowly two tears trailed down his face, and were lost in his beard.

Shoulders bent a great deal now, hands gripping the stick feverishly, he stood and gazed, a solitary mourner.

Noon came. A whistle blew. The work of destruction ceased.

"I—I must go inside—just once!" he muttered. "I'll have to go inside—just once—to sit there—just once—and then I'll say good-by to Macking's—"

This was his opportunity. As the last workman turned the corner, he hurried into the house.

Little had been done as yet to spoil the interior. Several rows of seats were gone, and, as he felt along the wall in the half light of the place, he stumbled across timbers. He went on, though, meaning to sit in the seat that had been his, his very own, in the grand lost days of the Macking's early success, when Mrs. Gimble had played and the whole city had come to see her.

A bit of light straggled after him from the lobby and the street, throwing all the front of the house into a mystic semidarkness. No golden glow bloomed on the curtain; no overture sounded to announce a coming play. How dull and silent it all was! An empty house; a cold, dark house, rattling its echoes.

But as he felt his way down the wall aisle, close to the still unsullied boxes, from which gilded cupids smiled down on him, his misty eyes supplied these lacking details. As he reached that rare old seat, a curious humming sounded in his ears, and he drew up, as if gravely surprised. His hand went to his head.

Once again he had caught the rustle of an audience, the low whispering, and the soft, subdued laughter of many women; he heard the swish of fans, the gentle crackle of programs, and the hurried feet of the ushers. Now!—came the imperative rap-rap of Billy Graham's baton on the music rack, and—and yes, old Otto with his violin crawled from the trap beneath the stage!

Ah! They were playing "Faust," the ballet music; and, with a pulsing of color, like the flush of some ancient sun, the lights glowed up on the stained lacquer of the curtain. A warm throb of happiness swept through him, half stifled him. The curtain lifted with a vast sighing; he leaned forward. He knew that set—how well he knew it!—the morning room, with a vista of garden beyond a fragile lattice, and sunlight sifting through. Mrs. Gimble had used it in her famous comedy, and—

He saw vague, shadowy figures on the stage; he caught old lines; a ripple of laughter came, fresh as the scent of springtime, the perfume of his youth; and over it all flowed the cadence of that golden voice. But there was something—some one—missing— Now! That was the cue. The lattice swung open, and, from the garden wafted, danced a figure carrying roses, her hair blown by the wind, her cheeks ripe as June; and, oh, the merry light in her eyes, the winsome smile on her lips!

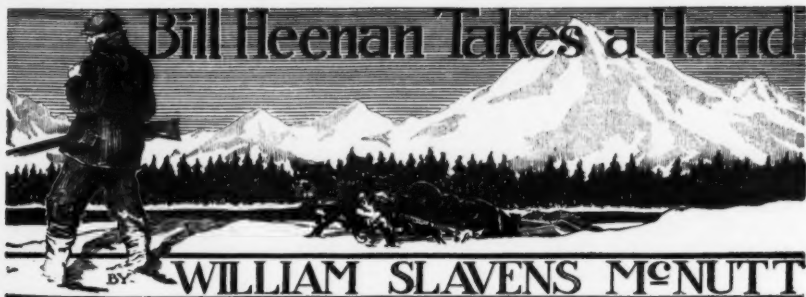
"Lidy—" he whispered.

"Lidy! Lidy!" he called, stretching out his hands. "Lidy, you have roses, but not like mine. They were all for you, dearest. Can you hear me? Don't you understand, now? There is no love like my love—"

Slowly the winsome face, the dark eyes, turned to him—slowly, as her hands reached out to him, the scene faded into the wreck of dusty wings; slowly fell the curtain, thrusting out over the house and its audience a great, black wave of utter darkness.

The workmen found him huddled down by the wall, close to the boxes, the gilded cupids smiling on him. He seemed to have gone so far and paused, startled into a still happiness by some strange, exquisite sound.





BIG BILL HEENAN, one of five men engaged in a game of "stud-hoss" poker at Blackie Mike's table in the Bald Eagle, disgustedly flipped up the trey of diamonds as Mike finished dealing the first round of the hand.

"Can ye beat it?" he inquired plaintively. "Sure ye can! I can't stay for a five-buck ante on a dog-gone trey. I couldn't catch cold to-night, anyhow. I've sloughed off better'n a hundred here in the last half hour, draggin' to short hole cards; an' the best I get is the worst of it. I ain't had higher'n a measly six-spot for a dozen hands. Come on, somebody, an' deal me off a card I can get in on 'thout lookin' the woodpile square in the face."

Blackie laughed.

"Do your winnin' now," he counseled. "Hard winter comin' on, old scout. Who's in this? All set. Here we go!"

Bill stacked his chips and estimated them with a sad eye.

"'Bout an even hundred," he said dolefully, "an' I charged in two hundred flat. One even century shot to hell already, an' I ain't played one hand clean through yet. Come on, now," he pleaded, as the deck was riffled for a new deal. "Gimme somethin' I can get in on. Honest, I need the money."

Three minutes later Heenan pushed back his chair and rose.

"Well, I hollered for action, an' I sure got it," he admitted ruefully. "What d'ye know about that? I got kings back to back all the way through,

an' he gets his third eight on the last card. Ain't that the way it goes? Every time a poor stiff sets in with his last bean tryin' to make out grub money for the winter—zowie! If I'd been lookin' for a piece o' change to stake myself to a good souse, I bet I'd 'a' cleared the game; but when I'm needin' a few hundred more'n I got, I couldn't win on a royal straight flush. No! If I did, somebody'd hold up the joint and take it away from me. That's the way it goes. Slip me an eatin' stake, Blackie."

Mike flipped a five-dollar gold piece across the table, and widened his habitually narrowed eyes in an expression of surprise.

"You ain't broke, are you, Bill?" he inquired incredulously. "Not sure 'nough broke?"

"Like a dog," Heenan assured him earnestly, as he pocketed the coin and sauntered away.

Now, the Benton Creek camp would have seemed to most men about the most undesirable place imaginable in which to be broke "like a dog" at that time of the year. It was late in August, and the mines would soon be shutting down. In a few weeks the last out-bound boat of the year would pass down the Yukon, fifty miles to the southward. Already men were beginning to hike for the outside. Every day saw groups of men, bending under their packs, plod off down the trail that led to the river, headed for the blessed "outside," with the agony of their summer's hard toil

behind them, and the recompense therefor in their pockets.

Most of them would be broke within a month after the time they landed below. Some would lose their summer's all, for which they had labored so fiercely, playing black Jack or poker on the boat going south, and land in the States penniless, to face a hungry winter of odd jobs, until such time as their feathered prototypes in the matter of migratory habits and common sense—the geese—should honk in the sky once more on their northward way. Then, some way, they would scrape together their passage money and forge north once again, to lay their yearly contribution of life and strength on the altar of hardship.

But now they fled the North as men flee a pestilence. To stick it out for the winter even with a good grubstake was trial enough; but to stay in broke—

Heenan was not married. He had never starved as yet, and past experience was the only guide by which he attempted to explore the future. He had never starved, and so had no reason to believe that he would.

He stopped by the roulette table on his way out, and stood for a few minutes idly watching the plays. Old Ambrose, the proprietor of the Star Restaurant, was bucking the wheel; and, as the old fellow raked in a bit, Heenan noted the excited trembling of his hands, and lifted suddenly narrowed eyes to his face.

It was a good face, albeit a weak one; or, rather, it was a moderately strong face that showed pitifully weak, because it was so utterly out of its rightful environment. The movements of a trout, as one sees them in the depths of a clear pool, are the acme of competent grace; but the same trout's futile floundering on the dry bank above is about as clumsy a performance as can be imagined. It would be unjust to condemn the fish as an altogether clumsy thing because he cannot move gracefully on dry land; and it would be unjust to classify old John Ambrose as a weakling because he could not perform successfully in Alaska. He was built to

live in a small town, to attend a small church, and to manage a small business of his own; and Alaska had "got" him.

Heenan studied the man's thin, flushed face, on which the conflict of eager hope and utter despair was so plainly etched, and shrugged his disgust.

"Damn' fool!" he muttered, as he passed out. "I didn't know he played. He'll last awful soon if he starts hittin' that trail."

About to turn in at the Arctic Restaurant, just next door to the Bald Eagle, Heenan paused, his eye attracted by a small, apologetic-looking sign that showed dimly under the light of a gasoline flare, far down at the end of the camp's one street. On the little sign was scrawled: "Star Restaurant."

"Might as well blow my eatin' money down there," Heenan thought to himself. "They'll be needin' all they can get if the old guy's took to spittin' his money up against the wall there at the Eagle."

The Star was a small, one-story shack with a lunch counter, a cooking range, and two small tables in the front, and two sleeping rooms curtained off in the rear.

The sound of a voice raised in anger came to Heenan's ears as he neared the place. He opened the door and stepped in. A man stood in front of the counter in a threatening attitude, talking angrily to a young, dark-haired girl on the opposite side. He was a big, raw-boned fellow, with a long, drooping, red mustache. He turned quickly at Heenan's entrance, and for a long moment the two men stared silently into each other's eyes.

He of the red mustache was the first to shift his gaze.

"Oh, hello, Bill!" he broke the tension of silence.

Heenan's eyes took appraisal of the white-faced, frightened girl in a swift glance, and returned, lit with a steadily brightening flicker of blue flame, to the evil face of the man in front of him. The man returned the hostile stare steadily.

"Well?" he inquired, after a time.

"Go to hell!" Heenan answered him evenly.

The man's coarse-tissued face mottled hideously.

"What——" he began, but Heenan's fingers at his throat choked off the sentence.

There was a short scuffle, and one of the tables splintered under the weight of the two big men as they fell across it and crashed to the floor. Heenan's fist rose and drove home—once. He loosened his grip of the other's throat, even as he struck, for he knew his power. The man's body went limp, and Heenan rose, dragged the inert form to the door, shoved it outside, and turned back to the cowering girl behind the counter with a boyish grin irradiating his big face.

"I just been achin' for a good excuse to lam' into him, since God knows when," he said happily. "Sorry I busted your table. What was he——"

"The beast!" the girl gasped, with a shudder of repulsion. "Oh, the beast!"

She laid her head on her arms, crossed on the counter, and cried.

"Have—have you seen daddy?" she asked brokenly.

Intuition bade Heenan lie.

"No, ma'am," he said. "I just came from the Eagle. What was Hunter up to?"

"He—he—— Oh, it was nothing—nothing!" the girl said brokenly. "I—oh, I wish daddy would come!"

Heenan swore savagely to himself. He slid from the stool and started for the door.

"I'll just run out and have a look around for him, Miss Ambrose," he said. "I'll dig him up somewhere, all right. An' I'll just about lam' a handful o' sense into him when I do," he added to himself as he shut the door from the outside. "Him with a daughter, an' gamblin' his money away!"

When Heenan reached the Eagle again, Ambrose was not there.

"Just left a couple o' minutes ago," the gambler back of the roulette layout answered Heenan's query. "Take a little chase out after him, will ye, Bill? I've seen 'em before go 'way lookin' like

he did and spill their brains. He only dropped a couple of hundred, but he took it bad. Went out shakin' all over an' talkin' to himself. He ain't fit to be alone in that shape. I've seen 'em go out before, lookin' like that, an'——"

The gambler broke off and wiped his brow with a hand that shook a little.

"I wish damn' fools like that'd keep away from this table," he said brokenly. There was a gleam almost of terror in his eyes. "I'm not out for blood money. I've seen 'em——"

He broke off, and, turning back to the wheel, resumed his mechanical, raucous chant: "It takes money to make money. Make your bets, gentlemen; make your bets. Five straight up on the double O, then on the green, the man says. Five on the single O. All bet? And away we go."

On the sidewalk, outside the Eagle, Heenan stopped and questioned a group of loungers.

"Ambrose? Yes, I see him just a minute ago," one of them answered. "He went up that way," pointing in the direction opposite from the Star. "Just a minute ago, he——"

But Heenan was gone.

Away in the direction in which the man had pointed, the street, as such, ended. Beyond was an acre or more of partially cleared land, irregularly studded with shacks. In the light that streamed from the window of the last saloon in the row, Heenan stopped and inquired again of a man who stood in the doorway.

"Went out in the clearin' there just now," the man informed him.

With the fear that the gambler had implanted in his mind steadily growing, Heenan stared out into the utter darkness that shrouded the clearing, and cursed his impotence. To attempt to follow a man out among those scattered cabins in that utter blackness was folly. The man in the doorway pointed to the far side of the clearing, to where one light shone from the window of a cabin on a small rise.

"That's Dave Will's shack," he volunteered. "Ambrose might 'a' been hit-

tin' for there. Him an' Dave's more or less tillicums."

Heenan nodded and stumbled off across the clearing, tripping over roots and stumps, mentally anathematizing himself as a fool for trying to follow the man at all, and yet possessed with the feeling that he was needed—that the old fellow was in some real danger, which he might guard him from.

Halfway across the clearing, he found the man he sought; found him on the ground, with the hilt of a hunting knife projecting from his side. He was still alive when Heenan stumbled over him. The light of recognition shone for an instant in his fast-glazing eyes when Bill knelt over him, holding a lighted match. He opened his clenched right hand, and, with a weak gesture, offered Bill a torn scrap of paper that lay in the palm.

"Don't—let them get—get that," he whispered. "Give—Jennie—half—give her—"

His strength failed him, and he fell back, unconscious; and, when Heenan carried him into the Eagle, five minutes later, he was dead.

It was patent that Ambrose had been murdered. The knife had been driven into his side from the back, and at an upward angle. It was impossible for the man to have inflicted such a wound on himself.

Ambrose had had no enemies, so far as any one knew, and he had had no money with him when he left the Eagle. So robbery was advanced as a possible, but improbable, motive for the deed. There was nothing to be learned from the man's daughter that night. She fainted when told of her father's death, and passed from the merciful oblivion of unconsciousness into a delirium, moaning constantly: "I knew it! I knew it! I knew it!"

There was nothing to be learned from her until she should have recovered from the effects of the shock, and Heenan's story was barren of any hint of clew to the mystery. In relating his story to the marshal, he neglected to mention the torn scrap of paper that the dead man had given him. In fact, he forgot all about it until, late that night,

sitting on the edge of his bunk, in his cabin, he fished in his pocket for a match and drew out the torn fragment. The piece had evidently been torn from the bottom of a written page, of which it contained two full lines and a signature. It read:

Tree sixty feet south of the big rock that looks like a man's head and shoulders.

JAMES ENDICOTT.

Heenan scratched his nose thoughtfully as he read.

"He wanted to give me that paper," he mused. "He sure did. He wanted me to take it. Now, what the hell——"

A five-minute inspection of the fragment of a sentence availed him nothing, and he put it back into his pocket and started to undress.

"I s'pose his daughter'll know what it is," he reflected. "I'll show it to her when she gets her senses back."

He had crawled between his blankets and was on the point of blowing out the candle, when he paused and squinted quizzically down at his trousers lying at the foot of the bunk. After a moment he reached for them, fished the slip of paper from one of the pockets, and, studying it intently, slowly repeated the written words to himself a number of times; then lit the enigmatic slip in the blaze of his candle and absently watched it burn.

"I can remember what it said, an' what nobody but me knows ain't goin' to hurt nobody but me," he moralized, as he blew out the light. "An' it ain't goin' to do nobody no good, either," he added, with a satisfied grunt, as he settled himself in his blankets.

When Heenan awoke the next morning, it was to the consciousness of a blinding headache. He raised himself on his elbow, and gazed stupidly about the cabin. It was pervaded by a sickly, sweet odor. Heenan sniffed experimentally, glanced sharply at his trousers on the foot of the bunk, and eased his aching head back on the pillow.

"Chloroform!" he addressed the ridge-pole of his shack, grinning. "An' my pants don't lay like I left 'em. 'Tree sixty feet south of the big rock that looks like a man's head and shoulders.'

I dunno what that means, an' neither does the guy that frisked this shack last night."

The nurse who admitted him to the long, one-story frame hospital a half hour later said that Miss Ambrose was better and would see him. An awkward lump rose in Heenan's throat at sight of the girl's wan face framed in the luxuriant disorder of dark hair on the pillow, and his big body ached for action against whoever was responsible for the sorrow that looked from her eyes.

"They tell me daddy was—alive when you found him, Mr. Heenan," she greeted him, when Bill stopped awkwardly by her bedside.

Heenan nodded, unable to trust his voice.

"Did he say anything, Mr. Heenan? Give you any word for me?"

"Yes, ma'am," Heenan mumbled, with the air of an abashed schoolboy beginning a dreaded recitation. "Yes, ma'am; he says: 'Give Jennie half,' he says, an' he had a little piece o' paper in his hand that he acted as if he wanted me to take, so I—"

The girl gave a frightened cry.

"I knew it!" she said. "I knew it! You've got the paper, Mr. Heenan? What is it?"

"I thought maybe you'd know," Heenan answered, and told her that he had memorized what was written on it and then burned it. "It was just a little piece tore off the bottom of a letter, I reckon, an' all they was on it was, 'Tree sixty feet south of the big rock that looks like a man's head and shoulders.' An' then under that was wrote: 'James Endicott.'"

"I don't know what it was, Mr. Heenan," the girl said hopelessly, "but whatever it was, it was for that daddy was killed. It was the only thing he had that could possibly be considered of any value."

"It was worth somethin'?" Heenan questioned eagerly.

"Daddy thought so. Ugak Charlie, the Indian who was sick so long in that little shack just behind our restaurant, died early yesterday morning. Daddy

had taken him meals several times while he was sick, and been kind to him in lots of little ways; and just before Ugak died he gave daddy that paper. Daddy came to me, just trembling all over with excitement, and told me that our fortune was made—that we were rich. He said that all he needed was a few hundred dollars to make a fortune.

"I—I—daddy wasn't practical, Mr. Heenan. He was just the very best-hearted, finest gentleman in the world; but he wasn't practical. He was left a fair-sized fortune by his father, but he lost it all in unwise investments. He had several thousand dollars when we first came to Dawson, and he squandered all of that on worthless properties. He was always wildly enthusiastic over every new scheme that he became involved in, and so perfectly certain each time that he would be successful, that—we've had a hard time for the last two years, Mr. Heenan; and when he came to me yesterday with that bit of paper, so excited, and so sure that he—I—I scolded him, Mr. Heenan. God forgive me for it! I was cross with him, and refused even to look at the paper or listen to what he had to say. I thought it was just another of his impractical schemes.

"He was sensitive about his lack of business ability, and what I said hurt him dreadfully. He didn't say anything more to me about it until late yesterday afternoon. Then he came into the restaurant, and got all the money we had—about two hundred dollars—and went out again. I tried to stop him, but he was like an insane man.

"I've got the chance to make a fortune," he said, 'and I'm not going to let some one else come in with me just because I haven't enough money to outfit, and then cheat me out of it all.'

"I asked him what he was going to do with the money he had taken, and he said that he was going to make it win enough to buy an outfit. I found out afterward that he had tried to borrow some money from Mr. Hunter, and he—"

"Hunter?"

"Yes."

"Did Hunter know what your dad had?"

The girl shook her head. "That's what he was angry about. Dad was already in debt to Mr. Hunter, and yesterday he went to him and tried to borrow five hundred more, saying that he would pay back five thousand within three months. Hunter wanted to know how he expected to do it, and dad wouldn't tell him; so Hunter refused to loan him the money. Hunter came into the restaurant, last night, and asked me what dad was up to. When I told him that I didn't know, he said I lied. He said that daddy and I meant to cheat him. It was just then that you came in—"

Heenan leaned close.

"Ye got any idea that mebbe 'twas Hunter that—"

The girl tightened.

"Yes," she said; "I have."

Heenan straightened up.

"So have I!" he said decidedly.

"I—I haven't said anything about it to any one else—yet," the girl said. "Do you think I ought to suggest to the authorities that—"

"Gawd, no! Don't ye go an' do that!" Heenan interrupted her affrightedly. "Ye never want to get mixed up with them people, Miss Ambrose. Ye git all tangled up with marshals, an' lawyers, an' them judges, an' ye ain't got a ghost of a show. Naw, sirree! You just keep still about it, an' let me nose round a little an' see what's what. What d'ye reckon this paper your dad had was? Directions to a new strike, or somethin' like that, huh?"

"I suppose so."

"An' ye didn't see it at all, huh?"

"I saw it, yes; but I didn't read it."

"How big a piece o' paper was it?"

"Perhaps six or seven inches long and four or five wide."

Heenan nodded with a satisfied air.

"Somebody's shy a couple o' inches o' information they're real liable to need, an' they ain't nobody but you an' me knows what that two inches is. He mussed up my shack last night lookin' for it. I dunno who he is, but he knows

who I am, an' I reckon he'll find me quicker'n I could find him. Now you just go and forget what you know, an' lemme handle this in my own way, will ye?"

The girl nodded, and her eyes suddenly flooded. With an impulsive movement, she grasped one of Heenan's great, hairy, red hands, and pressed it to her cheek.

"You're good, Mr. Heenan!" she sobbed. "You're good! I'm so alone!"

"Aw!" said Heenan. "Aw!"

The emotion that stirred in his soul was as powerful as any that ever forced an undying sentence from the lips of any of history's heroes; but Heenan's only verbal expression of a supreme moment was "Aw!" He drew his hand clumsily away, and went out, walking on tiptoes.

The meadows and hills flamed gold and crimson with the lovely death of the summer's luxuriant verdure, as the swiftly shortening September days passed away and the sun shone pale and cold low in the clear sky at high noon. The last outgoing boat chuffed down the river, jammed with the last boat's overload of passengers. The ice began to creep out from the banks of the river, the first snow came, and the ptarmigan shed the last brown specks from their winter coats of white.

At Benton Creek the murder of old John Ambrose was no longer a topic of general conversation. Dan Hunter had taken over the restaurant in payment of Ambrose's note for five hundred dollars, and had sold it to a Greek. Ambrose's daughter was clerking in the N. C. Company's stores, and Heenan—Heenan was bumming. He spent his time lying around the gambling houses and dance halls, borrowing a dollar or two whenever he could get it, and drinking whenever anybody would buy a drink for him.

He had not spoken to Miss Ambrose since the day after her father's death, when he had called on her at the hospital. When he passed her on the street, he avoided her eyes; and, after

this had occurred several times, the young girl, her face drawn and white, set her pretty chin a trifle firmer, and ignored him when they met.

She often heard him talked of by men in the store. He was "on the bum," they said; "going to the bad fast." The suggestion was freely offered that he should be arrested and set to work on the woodpile. When the girl heard these things, or saw Heenan slouching from one saloon to another, frowsy and ill-kept, she winced with humiliation at the remembrance of her expression of thanks and faith in the hospital. To thank or put trust in such a disreputable hulk! What a silly fool she had been!

There were times when the startled thought that Heenan himself might have murdered her father came to her. He was capable of it, she assured herself bitterly; and to think that at his bidding she had kept to herself things that, if she had told the authorities, might have been of some avail!

Then came a time in the early part of November when it occurred to her that she had not seen Heenan for several days. She asked one of the clerks in the store about him.

"He's gone, I guess," he told her. "I heard some of the boys in the Eagle talking about him last night. Nobody's seen him for a week or so. He probably got scared for fear they'd take him up and put him to work, and mushed out. He's very likely got an old tillicum holed up in some cabin out in the creeks, who'll stake him to a bunk and his grub for the winter."

And that was the generally accepted idea of Heenan's disappearance from Benton Creek.

The real manner of Heenan's going was quite different. He woke in his bunk one night in the latter part of October, and turned his head to look into the muzzle of a forty-five, held in the hand of a man with a flour sack, with eyeholes cut in it, pulled over his head. "Get up!" the man ordered him.

Heenan rubbed his eyes, and yawned. "Sure!" he assented sleepily.

He got out of bed, shivering in the

sharp chill of the cabin, as he threw aside the blankets and began to dress.

"You been one long time comin'," he said, as he pulled on his trousers. "It's been good mushin' weather for a week. What ye been hangin' back for?"

The man with the gun gave a start.

"What—what do you mean?" he demanded sharply.

Heenan motioned with his hand wearily.

"Aw, hell, Hunter, stick that gun in yer belt, an' take that flour sack off yer head! Ye look like a whitewashed totem pole."

The voice of the masked man was shakily nervous, as he answered:

"No—no foolishness, now, Heenan. Mebbe I'm Hunter, an' mebbe I'm not. Whoever I am, you're goin' to come along with me, an'—"

"Sure, I'm goin' to come along with ye!" Heenan agreed patiently. "I want to go just as bad as you want me to, but put that gun in yer belt. It might go off an' hurt me, an', if it did, we'd both lose a nice piece o' change."

The masked man pondered this.

"Ah! We would, eh?" he said finally.

"We sure would, old-timer," Heenan answered him, grinning. He tapped his head significantly. "What you want is right there, old son, an' it ain't nowhere's else. So you want to be awful careful o' my health, savvy?"

The man came closer.

"See here, Heenan," he said confidentially. "Do you know where this place is?"

Heenan had not the faintest idea of what or where "this place" might be, but he answered, with the utmost nonchalance:

"Sure!"

"Then why didn't ye go there alone an' get it?" the other demanded quickly.

"Aw, Hunter!" Heenan reproached him. "You don't seem to have no idea o' how well I like ye. I wanted to have ye along for company."

"Cut out that Hunter!" the masked man retorted. "Whether I'm him or not, don't go callin' me that till we get out o' camp. Now, see here, Bill; talk business. You got a piece tore off the

bottom of a letter from Ambrose, the night you found him, didn't you?"

"Did I?"

"Yes, you did. Come on, show down, Bill! You destroyed it?"

Bill nodded emphatically.

"You bet your sweet life, I did!"

"All right! I did the same thing with what I got. Now, Bill, I've got enough to go on to be pretty sure o' locatin' this place without what you know. Don't get the idea that I can't make it without you, 'cause I can, see? It might take me a little longer, but I can do it, all right, see? Now——"

"Aw, ye can, can ye?"

"I sure can."

Bill sat back on the bunk, and began to unbelt his trousers.

"Run right along, old-timer," he advised. "Don't let me butt in on your little party if I ain't needed. I'd hate to butt in where I wasn't welcome."

The man swore savagely, and suddenly jammed the muzzle of the gun in Heenan's face.

"Now, you come across with what you know," he snarled, "or I'll——"

The hammer of the gun rose under the pressure of his fingers on the trigger. Heenan stared up at him without the flicker of an emotion save contemptuous boredom in his face.

"Go ahead!" he invited. "Shoot, if you're goin' to. Don't stand there an' talk about it. If ye don't aim to do it, why, put that gun up, an' quit actin' like a damn' fool. Yes, a damn' fool! If ye wasn't one, ye'd have sense enough to know ye ain't got no chance o' scarin' anything out o' me. Well?"

The man slowly lowered the gun, and stepped back.

"All right! What d'ye want, Heenan?" he capitulated.

Heenan leaned over and slipped a moccasin over one German-socked foot.

"Ah! Half'll do me," he answered modestly. "I'm no hog. You an' Shorty McCook can split the other half between ye."

"You're pretty wise, aren't you?" the man in the mask sneered. "How did you happen to get on to Shorty?"

"Get on to him? Ye couldn't keep off o' him if he was in sight or hearin'! It's a wonder the whole camp didn't get next. On to him? I was on to him the first day he come up an' bought me a drink. I thought I was goin' to have to take him to the justice of the peace an' swear on the Bible I was the man he was lookin' for, 'fore I could get him to take the hint. You're a plumb fool to have a weak sister like that mixed up with ye."

"He ain't mixed up with me no more," the man in the mask said meaningfully. "It was him tore that letter gettin' it away from—— Ah! He was a mutt from start to finish!"

Heenan grinned.

"Was a mutt," he repeated, emphasizing the "was." "My! My! You're an awful bad man, ain't ye? So ye done for Shorty after he made sure I had what ye wanted? Huh! I bet you'd shoot your own mother if you could catch her when she wasn't lookin'. Ye make me 'most afraid to go along with ye."

"You right sure you're goin' along?"

Heenan finished knotting the thong in his moccasin and stood up.

"You bet I'm goin' along!" he said, and there was no assumption of levity or sarcasm in his voice. "You can't get there without what I know, an' I can't do nothin' without what you know. That's a straight show-down. I'm goin' along, an' I'm goin' to git half, an' I'll just bet ye that half, Mr. Bad Man, that I come back again, too. Ye got the outfit for two?"

The man in the mask nodded sullenly.

"Shorty was fixed to go," he explained.

Heenan grunted.

"Well, you just take my tip an' don't go figurin' on ever sayin' 'was' like that about me, an' we'll get on better. You know the way——git movin'."

Heenan blew out the candle, and the two furred and moccasined men passed out of the shack into the bitter, brittle cold of the clear, starlit arctic night. Heenan winked solemnly at space.

"Now, where," he wondered, "am I

goin' along to? And what am I goin' to get half of?"

On a wild night, three weeks later, a man sat before his stove in a cabin far up in the arctic waste, three hundred miles north of the Benton Creek camp, hearkening absently to the thunderous roar of the blizzard that had but just begun.

He was an old man, with a thin, strong-featured face that at some time must have expressed intelligence; but now all expression was gone from it. It was like a thing carven of wood; a face on which sorrow and mirth, despair and hope had long since ceased to register. His deep-sunken, black eyes were like a lizard's—beady, and void of any human expression. His hair was snow white, and fell far down over his skinny, stooped shoulders. His beard was as white as his hair, and reached to his waist. He was dressed from head to foot in skins.

There was no bunk in the small cabin, and no table of any sort. On the dirt floor in one corner, a pile of skins marked what served as a bed. A spot in front of the stove, littered with bones and fish scraps, was the savage substitute for a table. The only reminders of civilization in the entire cabin were a gun of ancient pattern, a rusty tin plate, a hunting knife, a small hand ax, and the sheet-iron stove, before which the old man squatted.

A voice, heard over the roar of the blizzard, roused the strange old man from his reverie; and, without haste, without the slightest expression of surprise, he rose and forced open the snow-clogged door to admit—Bill Heenan.

Haggard and dazed, Bill stumbled into the weird cabin, lit only by the glow from the open front of the stove, and stared about him stupidly. The old man drew the door shut and spoke.

"So you've come, eh?"

The voice did not seem to belong to him. It was the well-modulated voice of an educated man of the world. It were as if some personality other than his had made use of those withered old

lips as a medium of expression. Heenan stared at him bewilderedly.

"Hunter—Hunter ain't showed up, huh?" he asked thickly.

The old man's dead face gave no sign that he knew or understood; but again the low, clear voice, with its unmistakable inflection of education, came from the old lips.

"Hunter?"

"They—they was two of us," Heenan panted jerkily. "Two—two of us. We seen—the spark from your fire. Then the—the storm hit us. We got—got lost from each other. Can't—see a foot out. I just—just bumped into the shack by—by bull luck. He ain't—ain't come, huh? I reckon he's—he's done for, then."

The old man resumed his squatting position in front of the fire.

"It's just as well," the alien-seeming voice commented. "I would have had to kill him, anyway. You have been a long time coming."

Heenan's flesh tingled as he stared at the wildly garbed old mummy of a man.

"Long time coming?" he repeated blankly.

"Yes," the voice answered. "It must be more than a year now. What month is it?"

"No—November," Heenan stammered.

"Yes, it's more than a year. It was in August—the latter part of August. But I knew you would come."

"You—you knew I'd come?"

"Wherever gold is, men will come. It's been long, more than a year; but I knew you'd come. Before I killed him, he gave Ugak, the young Indian, a note, telling where it was buried, and Ugak got away. I could never find where he had buried it, but I had only to wait. Ugak got away, and some time those who knew would come. Where gold is, they will come. But it has been long. More than a year. I could not have waited much longer, for I had only three cartridges left. So you got the letter from Ugak? Tell me what was Jim's version of the trouble?"

"I—I dunno," Heenan mumbled, his eyes fastened on the skin-clad figure in

a hypnotic stare of amazement. "I dunno."

"Ah! He gave none, eh? I killed him in self-defense. He was trying to drive me mad, so that he could have it all. He found out that the sight of him was driving me mad, and, after that, he would never stay out of my sight for a moment. You see, he wanted to drive me mad, so that he could have it all. He sat on the sun and laughed at me all one day; and it seemed so strange to see him sitting up there that I couldn't resist looking at him, and the sight of him was driving me mad; so, when he came down from the sun that night to get his supper, I killed him. It was self-defense, you see.

"But he knew that I was going to do it. You see, he was a devil; and devils know everything. So he hid his gold and sent a letter away with young Ugak, telling where it was hidden. He told me that when I killed him. So all I had to do was to wait for you. I'm very glad you came, for I must get back now, as quickly as possible. Nellie will be worried about me, poor girl! Can't you imagine the joy and pride in her face when I get back with the money and tell her that we can be married now? Ah, yes! She will be worried. I must hurry!"

The man rose deliberately, and advanced toward Heenan. There was no expression in his face, none in the beady eyes. There had been none during the mad, disjointed recital of a northern tragedy. The face was the face of a dead man preserved. The eyes were those of a lizard. They saw, and yet saw not. Only the well-modulated, kindly voice, with its unmistakable inflection of education and breeding, was humanly alive; and there was no coördinance of voice with face or body. It was as if the shrunken husk of what had been a man contained a phonograph filled with the record of another's voice.

"And now," he said, "tell me where the gold is hidden, and then I must kill you."

The fight was a fierce one, for the old man's shrunken body held the unnatural strength of the maniac; but the strength

was short-lived, and after five minutes of fierce struggle, the skin-clad figure went limp in Heenan's arms. He bound the man securely with strips of thong from a pile that was coiled at the head of the bed, and threw himself down on a reindeer skin behind the stove, panting, spent, and sick with a lonely horror that he had never known before. He lay so for a long time, fighting off the weakness of the superstitious terror that assailed him. When he rose, the bound man still lay inert as he had left him. Heenan leaned over and put his ear to the man's shrunken breast. The heart had stopped. The last stubborn spark of life was cold.

The storm lasted for two days and nights. When it was over, Heenan went in search of Hunter. He found what was left of him in the snow beside the sled some two miles from the cabin. The dogs were still at him. And he found something else. A few hundred yards from the cabin, on the shore of the small lake on which it was built, stood a huge, lone rock. The outline of it, as Heenan first caught sight of it in the bright moonlight, all shrouded in snow as it was, was still strikingly suggestive of a man's head and shoulders. On the first rise of the bank, some sixty feet to the south, a lone pine—

Two days before Christmas, Heenan drove a weary team of dogs into Benton Creek. He was riding the sled and swearing weakly at the pain from a pair of rather badly frozen feet. On the seat were four caribou skin pokes plethoric with gold dust, aggregating forty thousand dollars.

The morning after his return, Miss Ambrose called on him at the hospital, to which he had been taken to have his feet cared for.

"An' it's all yours," Heenan wound up his story to her. "Naw, you ain't goin' to split with me. You can give me a thousan' for wages, if ye want to, to last me out the winter; but that's all. It's yours. It'll help some, huh?"

"But, Mr. Heenan, is it all our—mine?" the girl questioned anxiously.

"Wouldn't the relatives of these men have a claim——"

"Hand me my shirt!" Heenan interrupted her.

He took from the pocket a leaf of yellowed paper and unfolded it.

"It was in one o' the pokes when I dug it up," he explained. "Read it."

The girl read:

Aug. 28th, 1892.

TO WHOEVER FINDS THIS: My pardner and I have made a clean-up. We have been up here for two years. We have made it down as far as this lake, but will have to wait and try to get out over the snow. My pardner is no good. I guess we are both crazy, but he is no good, anyhow. He won't cook when his time comes. I think he is going to try to do me. It won't do him no good. I'm hiding this while he is asleep. He is awful lazy, too, and wants to sleep all the time. I have sent Ugak out with a letter, telling where I am hiding it. Somebody may get it from him. My pardner ain't going to get out with it if I don't. He is no good. I ain't got nobody to leave it to, and I ain't going to see it go to any o' my pardner's people if he does me dirt. James Endicott ain't my name, and I ain't going to tell his

name. If he does me dirt it ain't going to do him any good. I guess we are both crazy, but I don't care. He ain't no good.

JAMES ENDICOTT.

The girl looked at Heenan with horrified eyes.

"It's terrible!" she whispered. "They were both insane, weren't they? And that other man has been up there alone for more than a year, since——"

"Did you notice the date on that letter?" Heenan interrupted, in a queer voice.

The girl looked again, and gasped.

"Eighteen ninety-two! Why—why, that's ten years ago! That—— Why, Mr. Heenan, he couldn't have been there that long like that! He——"

"Course he couldn't, but he did, didn't he? Yeh! He must 'a' been dead, but he was alive! Waitin' there! An' when I blew in, he says: 'Ye been a long——' Say! Go see if ye can't talk that nurse into gittin' me a drink, will ye? I need it!"



THE PARVENUES

THE newly rich afford us
Most humorous amaze,
Suppressing all allusion
To older, humbler days.
They lack the virtues gracing
Those to the manor born,
And spend their time in being
The snobs of wealth we scorn.

The newly poor will also
Amuse us with their ways,
Persisting on orating
Of seeing better days.
They lack the ancient virtues
Of rooted penury,
And spend their time in being
The snobs of poverty.

McLanDBURGH WILSON.

DOING THINGS RIGHT BONNIE R. GINGER



IT was seven o'clock of a cold Saturday night.

Mrs. Josie Gibbs—known professionally as Miss la Grange—pretty, gray-eyed, and alert to her small finger tips, had dropped in at Schonbaum's Sixth Avenue drug store for a look at the window in which, next Monday morning, she would demonstrate to the passing throngs the Fumo-Curo Discovery for Tonsillitis, Bronchitis, and Common Colds.

Having taken in at a glance the strategic details of the new position, Josie turned, smiling, to the druggist.

"All right, Mr. Schonbaum; it's a good corner for crowds. I'll do business, and bring business to you."

Schonbaum was surveying her across his cigar counter, and suddenly he arrived at inward conviction.

"You are a good business woman," he said, and nodded ponderously.

Josie nodded, too, agreeing with him unaffectedly.

"I am that. I believe in doing things right," she said emphatically; and, indeed, she was stating a life conviction in these few succinct words.

Schonbaum was thinking.

"And she is a pretty woman—and she has a sensibleness—Are you going home now?" he asked solicitously; and at the question, or at the tone, Josie focused him suddenly with a look of great directness.

"Yes, Mr. Schonbaum—and I'm a married woman, and I have a twelve-

year-old son," she said, and the gray eyes twinkled in a manner that caused the druggist to abandon any prospective gallantry that he might have been entertaining.

"Ach, a boy!" he said. "Think, then, of that!"

Josie smiled a smile that showed she was not seeing him.

"Yes; most of the time I'm thinking of it," she said softly. "And he's thinking of me, too. He's waiting supper for me right now. Mr. Schonbaum"—with a sudden return to her alertness—"I believe it's going to be a great week next week. It's my last in New York, too—yes, my employer wants me to come right out to Ohio to demonstrate a new lung developer he's invented. But this last week here—I feel faith in it some way. Once in a while I feel that way about things. I don't know why it is—my friends say it's clairvoyance, but I don't think so! But you just keep your eye on little next week!"

And, with a final quick smile, she went out at the door that he held open for her with a deference not usually accorded by him to demonstrators, and turned up the avenue toward Fortyninth Street and the twelve-year-old boy.

Now and then people glanced at her as she walked briskly on. Josie had what is known as an "appearance." In her work she had to have it. Her black hair was not quite guiltless of a mingled extraneous ringlet or two—and, again, when one stands all day in a

stuffy window, one loses color, and a pale demonstrator is not convincing. Josie knew the psychologies of her craft; convincingness is, as it were, the keystone upon which the architecture of the demonstration depends—one simply must give the stop-look-and-listen effect. Therefore, she tinted her cheeks, and the tint made her gray eyes grayer and brighter—and when one demonstrates through a thick pane of plate glass, one's eyes are one's speech, and must be eloquent.

She always walked home at night. The air revived her, and gave her what she called her second growth of energy for the three hours with Tommy, her boy. She wanted them to be his brightest of the twenty-four, as they were hers.

For it was, after all, just another phase of her regular work—to a twelve-year-old boy the world is being demonstrated. He stands before the window watching its maneuvers and tricks, just in the manner of the street audience, that kaleidoscope of curiosity, credulity, skepticism, ridicule, and faith, with all its ever-shifting character potentials, and *buying possibilities*. And so is the boy as full of changing potentials, curiosities, credulities, skepticisms, and ridicules—and *faith*.

Childhood is mostly faith. It mostly "steps up and buys."

Destinies and Fates—how dare ye sell a gold brick to a child?

And yet, to the mind of Josie, Tommy's mother, that was just what the Destinies, et cetera, already seemed to have done.

Josie had not fibbed when she had told Schonbaum that she was a married woman—yet she might as well not have been married, for it was six years since she had seen Mr. Gibbs, and two years since she had heard from him, or even known where he was. Yet it would not have been true, either, to call herself a grass widow—for Mr. Gibbs had not deserted her; it was she who had deserted Mr. Gibbs.

In a life built upon the inborn policy of "doing things right," this step was

the one that Josie had never been entirely convinced had been entirely right. For Josie had a conscience, and was fair-minded, and she desired, when feeling sure, to feel *very* sure.

If Mr. Gibbs had been bad—but, on the contrary, he was devoted to Josie, and worshiped Tommy. In the first four years after she had left him, he had constantly written the most affecting entreaties for a return to the conjugal plane. Four years of such loyalty touch a woman. And yet, in Josie's mind, even the great duty of being a wife right was superseded by the supreme duty of being a mother right. And that was why she had left Mr. Gibbs.

It was not that he hadn't supported them, or even that he had squandered the support when Josie had provided it, as she had done most of the time. For he at least had tried to provide—he had always been *trying* something. Mr. Gibbs hadn't been a lazy man. He had had a fairly dizzying array of predilections, all entertained by himself with immense enthusiasm—Josie had never once seen his faith in his own ability waver, even when he had failed in such diverse lines as shoes, windmills, greenhouses, undertaking, and Florida reclaimed swamp. His failures had been due, not to himself, but to the "other party." It had been the other man who had been to blame always. Just once he had almost succeeded, when they had had a little hotel in Ohio. Josie had been happy, then, and it was where Tommy had been born. But it had gone the way of all of Mr. Gibbs' enterprises.

Even with all this, Josie might yet have stayed with him, had it not been for one other and transcendent fault—Mr. Gibbs had had a weakness for the juice of the corn, and the foolishness distilled from rye. And the weakness had gained in strength and waxed in stature, as weaknesses will.

Then Josie had taken little Tommy and departed. For one can surely not be a mother right in an atmosphere redolent of the foolishness distilled from either corn or rye.

And yet he had loved her and Tommy.

"Be sure you are right," said our greatest American. *Sure!* And yet—Tommy had begun lately to ask her about his father. For he was twelve years old—and it is no light thing for a twelve-year-old boy to be fatherless.

Would Mr. Gibbs have reformed? Would he have learned, perhaps, to be a father right?

And when Tommy asked her these questions about his father—and three times within the last week he had asked them, insisting more and more upon detailed replies—she was finding it harder and harder to know what to tell him, if she were to be perfectly fair to Tommy and to herself—and to Mr. Gibbs.

Josie reached Forty-second Street. Here a little crowd had gathered to watch a girl demonstrating cold cream in a window. Of course, these manifestations of kindred import attracted Josie, who joined the crowd.

Just beside her stood a massively pretty young person, the victim of embonpoint, earrings, and a willow plume the size of a banyan tree, who, perceiving Josie, took on an expression of ponderous pleasure—most persons were pleased at the sight of Josie, perhaps because she always seemed pleased herself.

"Why, Miss la Grange!" exclaimed the massive young lady.

Josie turned, and recognized her beneath the willow plume.

"Matilda!" she said genially.

Matilda had been a chambermaid in one of the innumerable boarding houses where Josie had stayed.

But Matilda at once gave out the information that she no longer did chambermaiding for a living. One might have been led to speculate what else she could do—indeed, in the boarding house she had been considered stupid and lazy. But the ambitiousness of Matilda had been underestimated.

"I tell you," she said, walking along beside the little demonstrator as an elephant might walk beside a purposeful little zebra, "this is called a free coun-

try. Well, I'm tired of being bossed around by people that ain't no better than me. Some not as good! Not meaning you, Miss la Grange—you're always a lady, you are—but I tell you, they look down on a chambermaid. I want to go into something professional—I mean, a vocation. No more menial service for me!"

"Well," said Josie at once, "what line are you equipped for, Matilda?"

Now, in aspiring to a vocation, Matilda was not in the least disturbed that she was not equipped. It did not occur to her that it was better to be a very good chambermaid than a very poor anything else. And she would be a very poor anything else, as Josie knew. Therefore, Josie, in the kindness of her heart, read Matilda a little homily.

"This is an age of competition," she said—a fact proved by the elevated, which crashed by overhead, causing her to shout. "It's not so much what you *want* to be; it's *how hard you're willing to work to learn how to be it*. For, whatever it is, remember, there's a million people wanting to be that same thing, and willing to work their skins off to be good at it and get the first chance. It doesn't matter how hard you try, it's the *way*." Josie recalled Mr. Gibbs and his ill-directed efforts along all lines of known endeavor. "Now, I'm only a—"

Here Josie broke off abruptly. She had almost said "demonstrator," and she didn't want to say "demonstrator," because in the places where she stayed she always said that she was a singing teacher. That was what she had been, before she had married Mr. Gibbs. And somehow she didn't want Tommy to know that she was a demonstrator. It was her weakness—to want to appear more elegantly occupied to her twelve-year-old boy.

"Here I'm only a singing teacher," she went on, "but I'm an artist in my line. And now, more than once, when I've been standing up in the window"—she coughed suddenly—"I mean, teaching with the window open—people have stopped and said: 'There's an artist!' And they've walked in and offered me

a job—that is, I mean, asked me to teach them. You see, doing a thing well *convinces*. But, Matilda, you pick out the 'vocation' you want to do where you don't grudge learning how to do it well. Even if it takes you back to chamber-maiding again."

Matilda looked as nearly dubious as it was possible for her to look anything. And Josie, feeling sorry for her, pressed half a dollar upon her, for Matilda had intimated that she was a little "shy on spon." And at Forty-ninth Street they separated, Josie going westward and Tommyward, and Matilda, on the strength of the fifty cents, taking a car for a certain restaurant that appealed to her because of the cheapness and bulk of the food that it served.

It becomes our duty to follow Matilda, the ex-chambermaid.

In the chosen restaurant she sat, belatedly consoling her mental distress with goulash. For the fact that Matilda weighed two hundred and didn't look emotional was no proof that she couldn't be worried.

Josie's advice had only upset her. She was by nature not an energizer, and the idea of "working hard learning how" seemed inopportune just now, when she had but three dollars and fifty cents between her and the cold world.

Surely there must be a vocation for her somewhere. Poor Matilda fancied that vocations must be easier, somehow, than mere menial service. And, indeed, she was "poor" Matilda, for people are not in sympathy with the Matildas of life, and they do look down on what they miscall the unskilled trades—as if any trade, if done right, could be unskilled!

There were only two other people in the restaurant—two men at the table next to Matilda's. One of the men did not engage Matilda's attention; the other did.

Never in her life had she been impressed by such an air of enormous and immediate achievement as emanated from the second of these two men.

Everything about him seemed to spell

instant and continuous and weighty activity. Moreover, he was inclusive in his manner of busy-ness.

"Yes, *isn't* it a high-speed, rushed old world!" he seemed to radiate, just as if you were quite as speed-driven and affairs-burdened as he.

His very features and figure conformed to this busy-ness, as trees on a hill conform to the prevailing winds, or as desert plants conform to the aridity by becoming all roots—only, this man had become all spirals and little centrifugal twirls. His head was round and bald, and on this glistening, busy dome quirked a little gyratory wisp of hair, as if a little whirlwind had caught it in a final zip! His nose was round and quick, and over his importantly pursed mouth a mustache performed two neat, quick spirals. His eyes were as round and busy as a robin's when it listens for bugs.

Only he wasn't listening; he was talking.

The man with him may or may not have listened. He was attending with much concentration to a plate of goulash. By the desk the waitress chatted with the cashier, and outside the cold grew colder, and Matilda grew increasingly grateful for any distraction that took her mind from the unpleasing contemplation of a vocationless world.

"Then I'll have to go right out to Denver on Monday," said the busy man to the goulash enthusiast beside him, who nodded. "The sooner the quicker, that's sure! You know, something tells me it's the real thing this time!"

The friend with him again nodded, and the robin-eyed one took from a pocketbook a sort of memorandum, which he unfolded and read, with the air of having read it many times before. He seemed to be quoting:

"Black hair and gray eyes, medium height, looks about thirty or thirty-two, plays the piano in the Ute Chief Motion-Picture Theater on Arapahoe Street. *And,*" read the robin, in a tensely triumphant conclusion, "'calls herself Mrs. Josie Gibbs.' There," he said, to his companion, though his round eyes, alight with conviction, included

Matilda, too, "if that ain't my wife, I'll eat the paper off the ceiling!

"Why, of course, it's my wife!" he repeated, gazing defiantly about the empty restaurant, and again lighting upon Matilda's now openly gazing eyes. He shut the pocketbook with a victorious slap. "Away out in Denver!" He stared pensively for an instant, and sighed. Then he looked up alertly. "I'm going to find her at last—I just feel it. She won't get away from me this time. Not on your life! Playing piano in a picture show—well, she's the girl to do it. There ain't nothing she can't do if she takes a notion to try it. And do it well! I tell you, I've been looking for her all over the country, and I believe this is her."

"Denver's a long way to go—on a chance," said his companion, speaking for the first time, because he had now finished his goulash. He seemed a pessimistic, taciturn sort of man, whereby he did most decidedly differ from Mr. Robin. "And how do you know she'd live with you, if it is her? Women get these notions—you ought to know it. Maybe she won't come back to you."

For a moment a strange, almost comic, wistfulness came into the robin's face, quite transforming it, making it almost pathetic, as almost-comic things often are. Then his bright, busy sanguineness returned.

"Oh, yes, she will!" he assured the wet-blanket individual beside him. "I can start West Monday. The only thing I—" Here his round, quick eyes dwelt searchingly upon Matilda, who had quite forgotten that she was listening with eyes and ears and mouth. "I would have liked to place one more demonstrator in the field before I go. All I need is to find a nice, good-looking young lady between now and Monday, who's looking for a real easy, neat, ladylike position—and wants it quick."

Now Matilda heard that word "demonstrator," and saw the searching, challenging glance of the robin upon her—and it seemed to the ex-chambermaid as if a spirit had come and whispered to her from the very fountains of that dreamed-of vocationalism.

Matilda suddenly became subtle.

It happened that the waitress was passing, and, glancing at Matilda's plate, she said, as if surprised—for she knew Matilda:

"Why, you didn't eat your m'rang!"

Matilda had, indeed, eaten only half her dessert—omission due to her absorption in the other table.

"Well, no," she replied, with ponderous humor, feeling the eyes of the robin still upon her, "I didn't. And ain't it awful, too? Paying for food and not eating it! And next week, like as not, I won't be having no food at all—if something don't come along between now and then!"

And she lifted her eyes and perceived that the robin had heard.

Indeed, he had had her in mind all the while.

Within two minutes he had—by sotto-voce agreement—got rid of his taciturn friend, and, having ordered beer, was seated at Matilda's table—talking business.

"The neatest, slickest little job in demonstrating that ever was!" the robin explained to the rapt Matilda. "Not a word to say—just go through the motions. And wear a nurse's uniform—trained nurse, you know—hospital, medical! Finest chance in the world for a young lady who wants to do ladylike work."

Matilda thought of Josie and her advice about working hard learning how. And when the robin had, in his enthusiastic way, embellished the description of the demonstration, Matilda actually laughed at Josie.

"You see," explained the robin, in his man-of-affairs manner, "I have the Manhattan territory. I hire the windows, and I have another young lady engaged for downtown, and one for Harlem. I only just started up in New York. I'll show you how to do the thing, and start you off Monday morning. Monday afternoon I have to leave for Denver," he added.

The offhand way in which he said "Denver" only confirmed Matilda's impression that he was indeed a man of much achievement.

The salary was only six dollars a week—but the work was nonmenial; it was professional.

Matilda's dream of a vocation had come true.

In thinking—as we sometimes do—of the powers that manipulate our little destinies, we are apt to think, respectfully, that they must know what they're about, being powers. Yet do these little destinies of ours ever puzzle them, the powers? Do they ever sit, say, as we sit at school, with puckered brows and clenched toes, trying to make the sum come out right?

I ponder because of Josie, and that fancy of hers about "little next week" that it was going to be a great week. And were the powers having trouble with her little sum, and had she heard the scratching of their puzzled pencils as they tried, now this, now that, solution, so that they might write, as we at school used to write after the geometry problem: "Q. E. D."—"Which was to be demonstrated," or, "Which has been worked out right"?

For, alas!—that week, which was to prove so remarkable, started off in no style at all. On Sunday morning Josie got up with what one usually calls "an ache all over." By evening it felt so like grippe that she couldn't tell it from grippe. But it was not difficult to see where it came from—drafty windows in drug stores.

It was a difficult and a disagreeable day, and stormy. Tommy again asked those persistent, curious questions about his father. He was beginning to look like his father, but Josie was sure that in character he resembled her. He supplemented his schooling, which was fragmentary, with much reading, especially of the papers, and his immediate ambition was to grow up and support his mother, something that Josie had no longing for him to do.

"Mother," he said, looking up from the litter of his Sunday papers to where Josie lay, prostrated by the ache-all-over, "father's not in jail, is he?"

Josie sat up on the couch, and stared at him, scared.

"Jail! Tommy! Who put that in your head?"

"Oh, a kid at school. He asked me where my father was, and, because I couldn't tell him, he said that maybe he was in jail. Of course, I licked *him*—but why don't you tell me why father doesn't come to us? Why don't we live together? You promised you'd tell."

"He's not in jail, Tommy," said Josie gently. "I don't know where he is. I'll tell you, Tommy, when I feel better. Your father was very fond of you—but I can't tell you now, I feel too bad. But I promise to tell you all about it—honestly—I promise."

"But you've promised before," said the boy.

He returned to his papers, but the problem stayed with Josie.

She began to recall the days of the little hotel in Ohio. In those days, when she had been ill, Mr. Gibbs had always waited on her so assiduously. Suddenly it came over her how much she longed to be taken care of, to have a permanent abiding place, and an anchored life, not to stand in drug-store windows forever, giving her life forces out to people whom she would never see again.

On Monday morning she had fever, and couldn't eat the breakfast that Tommy got ready for her in his clumsy, loving way. And he made her promise not to go to work, and she did promise, though it was Monday, always her favorite day, and the first in the new place—and the first day, too, of her last week in New York, which was to be such a "great week."

She sent Tommy to school, and she lay there in the cold little flat, puzzling over the problems that would not "come out right."

Now—the good fatalist might say—the powers that make our destinies had finished Josie's problem, and there was nothing more to it. They didn't want the robin man to find the real Josie Gibbs, so they kept her in bed with a cold. When he returned from Denver, and the quest of a fictitious or some-

one-else's Josie Gibbs, she would have left New York.

But Josie was no fatalist. She believed intensely in one's making one's own destiny—that is, in telling the powers that they are just one huge joke—as for a fact they are if one determines so to regard them!

Josie lay in bed, reflecting, as was said, upon just such things as destinies. Her head felt like the stamping ground of a barbarous horde of torturing thoughts, wearing spiked shoes, and carrying clubs—and she "ached all over" harder than ever. But she loathed lying in bed. It was one thing that she could not do right. The more she remembered that it was Monday, and her last week, and how she wanted it to be a great week, the more unreconciled to the bed did she become. At last, about ten o'clock, she arose. All her feelings were the same, only more so; but it was impossible now to go back to bed and its thoughts.

She dressed, wondering how so many aches could find a foothold in one body—and started for Sixth Avenue and Schonbaum's store.

"I hate a quitter," she told herself, by way of self-exoneration.

As if she even remotely grasped the meaning of the word quitter!

As she crossed the street toward the store, she was struck perfectly motionless by the sight that met her staring gray eyes. In the second window of that very, selfsame Schonbaum drug store stood an enormous, blond young person, in a nurse's apron and cap, behind a rampart of three gigantic, very pink papier-mâché feet. One foot was peevish looking and swollen, the second the enormous young person was sprinkling with powder, and the third foot bloomed rosy and beautiful in the glory of restored health.

Placards pasted on the pane pronounced the processes, and proclaimed the virtues of the Fairy Friend Antiseptic Foot Rejuvenator.

The crowd before this window rivaled that which gathers for a fallen horse or a taxicab collision.

And Josie, crossing the street gasp-

ingly, recognized under the nurse's cap Matilda, the ex-chambermaid.

She forgot her aches, and went right up to Schonbaum, at the rear of the store.

"Well," she said, eying him steadily, "what are you thinking of, having two demonstrators at once? Mr. Mittelschloss would sit down and cry if he saw this. What do you suppose I can do, with a performing elephant next to me? I can't compete with Barnum & Bailey's. You've spoiled my week!"

"Well," said Schonbaum, spreading wide his fat hands, "a man comes here late Saturday night and hires the window off me. Your Mr. Mittelschloss didn't hire *two* windows, Miss la Grange. I got to make a living where I get the chance."

Josie gazed across the store at Matilda in the window, all unconscious of this critical inspection. Then Josie laughed. Matilda, sprinkling the powder and moving the placards, looked more like a construction crane handling steel beams than like a demonstrator. Hearing the laugh, Schonbaum took courage—he had not felt guiltless about the window.

"It's her first try, that's what. I think," he said. "She won't sell nothing. She's green."

"Yes," said Josie reflectively, "I know that."

And she donned her own little apron, a sort of tea effect, very neat and feminine. Seeing what a cold she had, Schonbaum wanted to give her some rum, but she shook her head, though she was aching cruelly.

"I'll forget my cold when I get busy," she said.

And thereupon, with a brisk smile, she stepped into her own window, before which the outside space was vacant, put up her placards, tapped on the pane, raised the Fumo-Curo apparatus, and elegantly and artistically exhaled a jet of steel-blue vapor into the air.

And then Matilda saw her.

It was the Fumo-Curo that enabled Josie to conceal her laugh, as she saw the stare of utter and bovine amaze-

ment with which her rival recognized her. She leaned around the end of the window and called:

"Hello, Matilda! Go right on working! Don't let a little thing like me put you out!"

And then she stepped into her place again.

"She knows I'm not a singing teacher," she said to herself.

Just then a man on the edge of the foot crowd heard the tap on the pane, and transferred one eye to the Fumo-Curo, then to its manipulator. At once he stepped to the inhaler window. Two passing youths halted. These made a nucleus, and the nucleus soon experienced a cell growth. Two women, a bum, a coal heaver, two bootblacks, three newbies, three shoppers, a fat drummer—thus Josie's crowd began.

Calmly and briskly she went on, tapping the window, lifting the Fumo-Curo, making all the quick, clear-cut motions, and meantime catching the eyes of the individuals with her own magnetic gray eyes, feverishly bright with the fever that was in her, which they never guessed.

Beside her demonstration, Matilda's was like the efforts of Lewis Carroll's elephant playing on a fife.

Curiosity kept a crowd constantly before the Fairy Friend window, but the sales went to Fumo-Curo. By noon Josie's victory was utter and complete.

Matilda, descending from her vocational platform, stared long and defiantly at the erstwhile friend who had become her rival. Until Josie had arrived, Matilda had enjoyed herself thoroughly behind the papier-mâché feet. She liked her uniform, she liked not having to talk, she liked overhearing the chance admirations that the crowd outside did not know she could hear—even her gestures with the powder and the medicated cotton were the gestures of the gentility that she had long coveted. The menialness of chambermaid-ing seemed far away.

And then had come Josie, expert, artistic, doing the thing right—proving that you must work hard to learn how. And the lazy, stupid soul of Matilda

resented this rival who insisted on disproving a short cut to vocational excellence.

"So!" she said, surveying Josie familiarly. "You ain't a singing teacher!"

"As you see," replied Josie, smiling. "How many have you sold, Matilda?"

"Seven packages," said Matilda. Josie gasped. "I'll likely do better in the afternoon," Matilda added.

"Oh, no, you won't," said Josie. "They never buy till you make 'em."

"Oh, well, I'm new at it," replied the ex-chambermaid. "Want to go to dinner?" she asked familiarly.

"No, I don't feel like eating. But that's just why you want to try harder, Matilda—when you're new, you have to make good. That's just when it takes work."

"Oh, well, just because I'm fat's no sign I ain't got some sense," said Matilda stiffly. And she went alone to a restaurant.

And Josie thought: "The poor duffer! She thinks, because we're in the same work, we're equals. As if there were any equality except ability!"

She rested a bit, and then went back to her window. But she ached harder than ever, and her head was like a volcano now, and her eyes unhealthy bright.

She worked on, however. Ages seemed to go by. Then it turned out to be only three o'clock.

"I'll go home at half past," thought Josie.

She had grown unaware of the crowd; she was just a feverish, aching automaton, going through motions that, by long habit of infallibility, still remained correct.

And then she heard a voice—it seemed a pleading, stupid voice—at her elbow somewhere. She turned. Matilda was standing below her, and for once she had mastered the barrier of her facial passivity and achieved expression. It was an expression of gloom.

"I guess I don't get the hang of this work, Miss la Grange. You offered to give me some tips—you see, I know I

ain't clever like you. But I just got to make good—I need the money!"

As she looked at the great, stupid girl, Josie was full of pity. She stepped down from her window.

"I tell you," she said gently, "it's not a good time to sell foot powder. It's in hot weather that people's feet hurt 'em. Just now their feet are shrunk, and don't hurt. Besides—New York's a hard crowd to convince. Now, take the placards—do they ever follow the words as I point 'em out? Never! They look at *me*, to see if I'm going to take a rabbit or a bunch of American beauties out of the inhaler. They think maybe I'll pull out a string of flags—sometimes I feel like saying: 'Watch, now, all, for the little birdie!' I can hear 'em say sometimes: 'What's she got there?' Can't they see? It isn't breakfast food, or a Christmas tree, is it? I try to make 'em attend intelligently, but they stare up with their mouths open—God knows they need the inhaler—they never let a germ go by! You've got to put in the paprika if you work in this town. You've got to *feel* your article in your heart—convince 'em—that's the idea."

Josie paused, wondering which part of her it was that ached so just now. Matilda murmured gratitude, but her face was woebegone. Suddenly Josie felt something twitching in her throat; it hurt, but it had to come loose—it was laughter. Yes, Matilda was funny! As funny as could be!

"See here, child," said Josie quickly, "give me that paper-bag effect you've got on your head, and I'll sell some of your foot powder for you. I'll show you how to do it—I like to see people do things right!"

And she stepped up into Matilda's window and began.

She made ten sales in fifteen minutes. She almost forgot how she ached; it was the impetus that came from the change of work, and the zeal of getting a thing done right.

And then—she didn't know how it was—but there were two round eyes staring, frightened, up into hers through that plate-glass window—and a small,

round, gyrotory man stood there—Of course, it wasn't a real man; it was just her fever. She really must go home, she was getting worse.

"Why," came the abashed voice of Matilda from behind her, "there's Mr. Gibbs! What'll he think of me?"

Of course, Mr. Gibbs never did think of her. He hardly thought even of the plate-glass window between him and the *real* and long-looked-for Josie Gibbs.

And Josie just stepped down from the window platform into his arms, as he came into the store.

"Thomas—I guess it's time you came," she said, looking up at him with her gray, shining eyes.

And then the eyes closed. Josie had fainted.

But it was a short faint. She regained consciousness just as the stupefied Matilda was explaining to the robin how Josie came to be selling his Fairy Friend—and Josie sat up suddenly, staring at Mr. Gibbs.

"This is *your* article Matilda's demonstrating?" she asked weakly.

And when he nodded sheepishly, she closed her eyes, thinking. For that had always been the way—she had always given out her energies, trying to make his ridiculous ideas work. And here she had been doing the same thing now—giving out her spent force to show a stupid woman how to sell *his* fake article.

"Josie," came the voice of Mr. Gibbs close to her. She opened her eyes, for the voice both appealed to her and commanded her. "My dear—I only went into this thing because. I couldn't stay anywheres till I'd found you. This took up my mind—for I've been trailing you all the time, hoping to find you. Josie, I haven't drunk any for two whole years—not a drop—and I've got a little hotel down the Jersey coast. That's where you're coming, Josie—with me—to the little hotel. It's ready, waiting—I've had it ready almost a year."

And Josie, looking at him, thought that he had changed. She believed that he had the hotel, because he looked as

if he *could* have a hotel; there was the air of achievement about him—humbled a little from the aggressiveness that he had worn when he had found Matilda in the restaurant—but still the air of a man who has been conquering himself, and prospering accordingly.

"A hotel!" murmured Josie dreamily. "Won't that be heaven? A place to stay put—to rest, and not move around. And Tommy——"

And then Josie remembered that promise of hers to tell Tommy about his father. And now she wouldn't have to tell; his father would walk in and take him in his arms—and speak for himself.

That was how it happened.

The robin took his Josie Gibbs home in a taxi. And, as they sped toward Tommy, he said, holding her hand:

"I've been thinking about your way of doing things right, Josie—and I want to

do this father job right. It pays to do things right."

And so decided Matilda, after conclusively proving her total inability and incapacity for following a vocation. Realizing that there is no short cut to expertness and convincingness, and not having the genius necessary to bluff things through, she gave up the vocating idea.

She decided to go back to chamber-maiding and learn the thing right.

For Josie promised to teach her—in the little hotel down in New Jersey.

So Josie, taking the thing out of the hands of the blundering powers, arranged her own destiny, and we have nothing further to do with her problem except to write at the end of it—the end of our knowledge of it—the symbol of completion:

"Which was to be demonstrated"—
"Q. E. D."



THE AUTUMN GLORY

OH, the olden, golden glory
With the autumn pomps unfurled,
Mantling every hilltop hoary,
Flaming up and down the world!

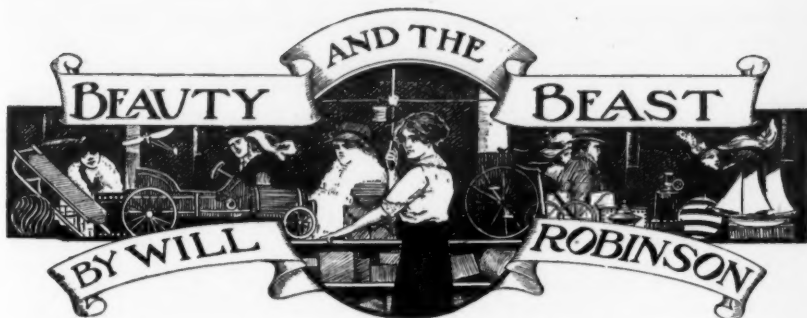
Scarlet bough and crimson creeper,
Burning branch and kindling spire,
Dawn on dawning growing deeper
With the transitory fire!

Morn on morn a radiant shaping
Of a pageantry sublime;
Eve on eve a rapt re-draping
Of the tapestries of time!

Not for one this sweeping wonder,
Bloom of beauty—not for one.
But for all men dwelling under
The dominion of the sun.

For from some celestial portal,
Whence all earthly splendors be,
Comes a voice to every mortal:
"Lo, lift up thine eyes, and see!"

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



CYNTHIA PAIGE, wistful and virginal, in her well-fitting, homemade blue serge, had barely entered the big, crowded Sunday-school room when a nice-faced boy of fourteen or thereabouts vigorously grasped her by the hand.

"You are a stranger, aren't you?" he asked, with hurried enthusiasm. "I'm on the lookout committee. We're very glad to see you."

And, before Cynthia could frame words to thank him, he had whisked away, and was welcoming some one else.

As the girl took her seat, her eyes, accustomed to the plain little church back in her Illinois town, viewed with wonder the scene about her. There were deep carpets under her feet, the woodwork was rich in dull browns, the walls were frescoed in soft tans and gold, and from little balconies above her head hung scarlet banners, each with a cabalistic name upon it. Cynthia also noticed a strange, eight-foot thermometer by the superintendent's desk, which evidently marked the attendance. Back of it, against the wall, was a great, clocklike dial that recorded the amount of the collection.

This latter instrument amused Cynthia, and she wanted to ask some one if they made the treasurer ring up each nickel as it was paid, as conductors do on the street cars. She was still smiling at the thought when she noticed, in one of the balconies, a man looking at her

intently. He was well to the back, and had turned as she looked up. But he undoubtedly had been scrutinizing her closely, and had smiled when she had.

The chorister stood up.

"We will try that new Christmas song again, children," he announced. "Ready now: 'Hark, the Christmas voices!'"

"What do you think of our music?" asked a voice at Cynthia's elbow.

Cynthia looked up, and saw the young usher who had met her at the door.

"It is splendid!" she responded enthusiastically. "Your whole school is. It's the finest I ever saw."

"It is pretty good," agreed the boy complacently. "We try to do everything pretty well out here in California." Then, remembering his manners: "I hope you will come here every Sunday. Do you like California?"

"I only came day before yesterday," smiled Cynthia, her shyness quite disappearing before the boy's manner, "but I am sure we shall like it. My mother came with me. She isn't very well. We—"

"Oh, she'll be all right here," interrupted the boy confidently; "everybody is. Are you going to buy a home here? Because, if you are—"

Cynthia's face colored at this.

"I only wish we were," she replied. "We haven't money to buy anything now. It took all we had saved to bring us out." She hesitated, and then went on, with a little catch in her breath: "Is it hard to find positions here?"

"Not a bit," announced the youth,

with superb assurance. "All the department stores get extra clerks for Christmas—if you would care for that sort of thing. Say," he went on, his eyes lighting up, "I tell you what I'll do: I'll take you to Horace B. Tavener's class. He owns the Tavener Department Store. At the close of the lesson, you just hint that you are looking for a position."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," faltered Cynthia, "on Sunday."

"Why not?" demanded the youth. "Mr. Tavener says religion is nothing if it isn't practical, and that people should always welcome chances to help one another."

The orchestra began a processional, and at a word from her conductor, the girl went with him through an open door. Unexpectedly, she found herself in the great auditorium of the church. It was spacious, cool, and quiet; soft lights came in subdued colors through the stained-glass windows.

"How beautiful!" she murmured softly.

"It sure is!" was the youth's hearty response. "Mr. Tavener's class grew so that they couldn't find room for it any place else. Sit down anywhere. And don't be afraid to let him know that you are looking for something to do."

Cynthia joined with sixty or more men and women who were finding seats in a compact body near the front of the church. When Mr. Tavener rose to address them, she saw a slender man of a little past middle age, with mild eyes and a carefully trimmed, gray beard. He talked well—just a trifle too fluently, perhaps. Some of his carefully rounded sentences suggested that they were pale echoes of sentiments expressed on similar occasions many times before.

But suddenly his words caught her waning attention.

"And so we may well appreciate," he was saying, "that the giving of gifts at Christmas time is as beautiful a custom now as it was in the days of the wise men, but the offering must come from the heart as well as from the purse.

We must give not only our money, but ourselves."

"What do you think, Mr. Tavener," asked a portly lady in gray silk, "is the wisest method of giving to the needy?"

The speaker took off his glasses and wiped them absently.

"Modern charity recognizes," he responded, with a detached air, "that the poor do not need gifts as much as they do a chance to help themselves."

Cynthia's eyes were again straying along the dim aisles, when her attention was attracted by a man sitting apart from the others. His head was bent forward, and he was so quiet that he seemed almost a part of the shadows himself. The half light caught his profile, and, with a start, she recognized him as the man who had been looking at her in the other room. Even as she gazed at him, he half turned toward her; then, checking himself, he looked away.

Suddenly conscious that she was staring at him, she, too, turned and saw her young friend, the usher, who was gathering the collection envelopes.

"Don't be afraid to tell him what you want," he whispered confidentially behind his hand. "A man ought to be as good as his words."

The class was rising and passing out. All at once Cynthia realized that the great merchant was standing before her.

"Is this your first visit to our class?" he asked affably. "I hope we may see you often. You are a stranger here?"

"Yes, sir. My mother and I arrived from Illinois Friday. We will stay here permanently if I can find employment. Would you think it very—very presumptuous if I"—Cynthia gulped—"if I should ask—if you could help me?"

"Help you?" repeated the merchant, looking very much alarmed. "What do you mean?"

"I have been told," began Cynthia miserably, conscious of her burning cheeks, "that you are employing extra clerks for the holidays. I wondered"—again she choked, and the remainder of the sentence came out with a rush—"if

you could find something for me to do there."

Mr. Tavener gasped. He looked as the prime minister of England might look, if, at a state dinner, the lady next him should poke her knife at his shirt front and demand votes for women.

"But, my dear young woman," he remonstrated, "this is Sunday!"

"I know it," replied the wretched Cynthia, "but it was so in line with what you said about giving people who needed it a chance to help themselves that I thought you might not object."

Mr. Tavener nervously tapped his hand with his glasses.

"Of course, of course," he said hastily, "I am always glad to—assist the—ah—deserving; but as to employing clerks in the Tavener Department Store—I have absolutely nothing whatever to do with that. However, if you could see the manager, Mr. McCurran, tomorrow, he doubtless could find a place for you."

There is a common saying back in Towanda that the Paiges have staying qualities. Perhaps it was family tradition that caused Cynthia, who desired nothing so much as to flee, to stammer out:

"You'll speak to him for me, Mr. Tavener?"

Mr. Tavener all but groaned as he wrote a line upon his card and handed it to her.

"Give him that," he said, and, with evidently suppressed emotion, he turned and walked away.

Cynthia was filled with a fierce desire to take the card that she held in her cold fingers and tear it up, but the thought of her mother deterred her; instead, she put it carefully into her card-case, and did not remove it until she handed it to Mr. McCurran the next morning.

She secured the position. The manager was glad to get anybody for the next three weeks, and, while Cynthia was obviously without experience, she had intelligence and good manners, and did not haggle about wages.

Cynthia's experiences for the next few days need not be minutely dwelt

upon. A California shopping crowd does not differ in its essentials from those of Chicago or New York, but any sort of a department store was foreign land to Cynthia, and the inhabitants thereof, especially those on the inner side of the counter, an alien people.

"F'reavens sake, look who's here!" gurgled Hosiery to Corset Counter. "Pumpkin Center must be pretty lonesome these days, with all its youth and beauty out here by the Sundown Sea."

Cynthia heard and understood, but she was too busy to pay serious attention. The celluloid novelties that she was selling were cheap and caught the public fancy. All day long the crowd swarmed about her counter, asking questions and demanding attention, until her ears were fairly deafened by the noise.

The stock of celluloid specials having been exhausted, on the second day Cynthia was put into the hosiery department. She was still tired from the day before, her head ached from the close air, her feet felt as if they would soon refuse to carry her weight. The sales slips, which had seemed so simple at first, grew complicated, and, though the other girls tried their best to help, their assistance only confused Cynthia the more. The last drop was poured into her cup of bitterness by an exasperated floorwalker, who said things that brought tears of anger and mortification to the girl's eyes.

The third day was her last at the big store. She was put behind a counter piled high with "remnants" of ribbons. These, too, proved "good sellers." It seemed to Cynthia that every woman in southern California had determined, cost it life or limb, to have first pick at her stock. They swooped upon her colored strips of silk like fish hawks after their prey. Vainly she tried to keep the different qualities of ribbon in their right compartments, and with equal futility endeavored to keep her mind clear enough to make out her slips correctly. It was like trying to run a sewing machine in a cage of wild animals.

Once during the afternoon she caught a glimpse of a man in a raincoat, who,

with a muffled face, stood watching her intently from the back of the crowd. Everything about him seemed familiar. In appearance he was not unlike Mr. Tavener himself, only larger, more rugged, and younger, but to her tired eyes he soon grew to be like a phantom in a sea of faces, and in a moment more he had gone.

Steadily the pain in her head grew more severe. At four o'clock she fainted, and sank in a heap on the floor.

They took her to the infirmary, and, a little after five, with her pay envelope in her hand bag, she went out into the street. A drizzling rain was falling, but its damp coolness felt grateful against her hot face.

She was tired, and more than a little frightened. She, Cynthia Paige, had been given her chance to help herself, and had failed. Her pay envelope contained a little over four dollars; they had ten more at home—and that was all. She thought of her mother, and, with a sob in her throat, bowed her face against the rain.

As she walked, her headache left her, and her mind became clear. She must rid herself of her depression before she reached home. The lighted windows of a dairy restaurant made her realize that she was hungry as well as tired. It was a place where the diner ate from the wide arm of his chair, but the food was good and cheap.

As Cynthia swung open the door, a sign on a little partitioned-off flower booth caught her eye:

Violets—15 cents a bunch.

Violets in December, and at such a price! It was her mother's favorite flower, and if there ever was a time in that dear lady's life, Cynthia decided, when she needed the inspiration of flowers, it was now. She could almost save the price out of her supper. Cynthia had always been guided by sentiment rather than by logic—she bought the flowers.

When she reached the counter, she moved down a little, so that a broad-shouldered man beside her would not see the meagerness of her order; then

she carried her supper to a chair in a dim alcove. As she seated herself, a woman next her rose and passed out, and the man took the vacant place.

The girl was too full of her own thoughts to notice him; but her hand bag slipped to the floor, and her neighbor picked it up and handed it to her. Then she glanced at him furtively. A white silk scarf that he had worn up over his chin had fallen, and she could see his profile. It was the one that had been haunting her ever since she had seen it in the dim shadows of the church.

Much confused, she was murmuring her thanks, when she noticed that he was almost as agitated as she.

"I beg your pardon for speaking to you in this way," he said, "but I am in trouble, and I wonder if you could help me."

At the sound of his voice, Cynthia's one thought had been of flight, but his words differed so from anything that she had imagined he might say that she paused and stared at him.

He was not looking at her; instead, his eyes were fixed on a little red memorandum book that he held in his hand. He was much younger than she had thought; but little, if at all, older than herself. If he had troubles, they could not be pecuniary ones, for his clothing, though rough, was of the best material, and gold buttons showed at his cuffs.

"I noticed you in Tavener's Department Store," he began hurriedly. "I am very much in need of a clerk to fill a difficult position in my own establishment, and I thought that perhaps you could help me to find one."

Cynthia drew a quick breath. It was as if some Olympian Ganymede had set ambrosia before a starving man, and was pleading with him to find some one to consume it. Then a troubling thought came to her. What if this strange neighbor of hers were mentally unbalanced? His actions did not wholly disprove the theory. Or worse, what if some evil import lay behind his startling request?

The man must have divined her thoughts, for he took from the leaves of

his memorandum book a card and handed it to her. It read:

Bruce Tavener, Toy Mender. — S. First Street.

"I am Horace B. Tavener's brother," he said, "though, as you see, a very much more humble person. My former assistant, a man, has gone to San Francisco. I thought that I would try a woman this time. The position, though it may seem trivial to you, demands rather unusual abilities, and I thought perhaps you might know——"

He paused.

"I—I—am not working in your brother's store now," said Cynthia, annoyed at the sudden rosiness of her face, "and I am looking for a position; but I'm afraid I couldn't——"

"I know," assented the man, still occupied with his little book, "you might not care for my work, or, indeed, be wholly suited to it. In the first place, it needs some one with absolutely no commercial instinct. Keen business sense would wholly incapacitate any one for the place."

Cynthia's face grew even pinker at this, and there was a decided hint of anger in her words:

"If you are trying to be humorous at my expense because you know that I was discharged——"

The man interrupted her eagerly.

"Were you really discharged?" he asked. "That looks as if you might be exactly the person——"

"Mr. Tavener——" began Cynthia.

Then, too exasperated to say more, she started to rise.

The man did not change his position or turn his head, but he laid a detaining hand upon her arm. There was positive pleading in his voice when he spoke.

"How can I convince you that I am in earnest about this? My shop is not a money-making place at all; that is," he corrected, "with a person like you to help me, I am sure I could keep it from becoming so. I have been looking for you for a year, and my first hint of your identity was when you smiled at the collection clock at the Sunday

school. It made you think of a cash register."

"How did you know that?" gasped the girl. "Only it was the street-car ones that I was thinking about."

"It's the same thing," said Bruce Tavener. "Next, I saw you discriminate between my brother's fine ideals, and his—well, just words. That made me pretty sure about you, and when you insisted upon his proving his theories by giving you a position, my belief came very near conviction."

Cynthia's eyes opened wide, but she did not interrupt.

"I was afraid you couldn't stand the pace in the big store," continued Mr. Tavener; "there was too much country sky and open air about you, and, although foolish doubts about your ability to fill my position still persisted in my mind, I determined to talk to you about it. That's why I followed you in here." A ghost of a twinkle appeared about his eye. "However, when after a hard day's work, you spent fifteen cents for flowers and ten cents for supper, my uncertainty was at an end. The wages will be eighteen a week. Why not give it a trial?"

Cynthia Paige had never, in all her life before, received so many mental shocks as she had within the last few minutes, but she felt sure of one thing—her strange companion meant nothing but good for her.

"You haven't given me much of an idea of what you want me to do, but I shall be very glad to work for you," she replied; and, as usual, she spoke out of her heart, letting her judgment catch up as it might.

Still Tavener did not turn to her, but said in a voice very low, but distinct:

"There is one thing that you must know first. Have you ever read 'Beauty and the Beast'?"

"Why, yes," replied Cynthia, scarcely surprised at anything this strange man might ask. "Why?"

"Do you remember," he went on, "that while the Beast's features were exceedingly repulsive, he tried to be fairly decent inside? Do you suppose

you could work in a shop where you would have to see such a man?"

"Yes," Cynthia's heart answered promptly, "if he was good and kind."

"He's human, like the rest of mankind," replied Tavener, "but he tries to be decent. You see, he was on a yacht once, when there was a boiler explosion. It was up to him to go down into the boiler room while it was still pretty steamy. A towel saved his eyes and one side of his face; the other side was cooked."

Cynthia's hands closed tight at the horror of it.

"Was it to save some one else?"

It was Cynthia's imagination that spoke this time.

"He was the owner of the yacht, so it was his place to go. Don't think there was anything specially heroic about it; there wasn't."

"Oh!" gasped the girl. "How terribly it must have hurt!"

"Yes," replied Tavener, "it hurt a great deal. Do you still care to work for me?"

Cynthia trembled violently, and then was quite calm.

"Look at me," she said, not as a clerk would speak to an employer, but as a woman to a man.

Tavener obeyed. It was pretty bad. The entire side of his face and neck was bloated and the color of raw beef; but his mouth, while it showed lines of suffering, was unscarred, and his eyes unhurt.

"Yes," said the girl, after a time, and very quietly, "I shall be very glad to work for you; that is," she added, with a touch of humor, to disguise her deep feeling, "if you think that I am incompetent enough."

The fineness of the girl must have touched the man to the depths; but it was no time for heroics. A rare smile touched his lips, and he returned in gay raillery:

"We shall hope—for the worst."

However, when Cynthia went to work the next morning, she discovered that the incompetence required in Bruce Tavener's work could only be so designated by the most violent perversion of

terms. The shop occupied the ground floor of a small, ancient, three-story building, owned by Tavener himself, in a part of town largely given over to foreigners and ne'er-do-well Americans. The upper floor he had rented out to people who, for one reason or another, had only the least possible amount to spare for rent.

The shop was divided into a small front room for customers, and a large one in the rear where Tavener worked. The establishment had, in a manner of speaking, both a wholesale and a retail trade. The first consisted of repairing broken toys for various department stores, the latter catered solely to children who not only brought their broken toys to be mended, but bought, at a sliding scale of prices, a variety of articles, ranging all the way from tops to stellar globes.

While Cynthia found the rooms clean, they were both in almost unimaginable disorder. Glue pots, tools, doll wigs, and paint were strewn about in a most intricate system of confusion.

"What are my duties to include, Mr. Tavener?" she asked.

"Everything that it is impossible for you to avoid," he replied gravely.

Cynthia rolled up her sleeves and went to work.

"It is just possible," said Tavener, as he watched his assistant's vigorous efforts to bring order to his quarters, "that my former employee, as well as his employer, may have carried this incompetency business to unnecessary lengths."

For the first half day Tavener kept to the back room. Toward noon he came in where Cynthia was working.

"Miss Paige," he said squarely, "as soon as you are more at home here, I intend to let you look after business in front while I work in the shop. Occasionally, however, I may have to help you a little. Will it annoy you?"

Cynthia looked directly into his eyes. "It is I who am to help you, Mr. Tavener. I hope you will let me work with you all you can."

That afternoon, for the first time, the tenants upstairs heard their land-

lord whistle as he went about his work. It was good whistling, too.

There were not more than a half dozen customers altogether, the first day, and Tavener waited on them himself. The counter was arranged so that the man's scar would always be in the shadow—away from the street.

After a customer had gone out, Cynthia said:

"I am afraid I don't understand your prices, Mr. Tavener. You charged that man a dollar for the same kind of a doll that you sold to the little Italian girl for twenty-five cents."

The mender of toys looked guilty.

"But, you see," he hastened to explain, "the little girl has been bringing me five cents a week for five weeks. I have had the use of the money all that time. The man only paid cash."

Cynthia said no more, but worked away—very happy.

A few days afterward it was the employer who came to the clerk for information.

"All businesses, you know," he said, "are apt to get into ruts. A girl who, when hungry, would pay ten cents for food and fifteen for flowers, ought to be able to suggest something out of the ordinary."

Cynthia laughed.

"Did you ever think of growing flowers in your back yard instead of tin cans? Nearly all the people upstairs owe you money; they also need light exercise and something to keep their thoughts away from themselves. Let them pay their arrears by making a garden."

"Tell me another plan as good as that," said Tavener enthusiastically, "and I'll raise your wages."

"I can give you another application of the same principle," rejoined Cynthia. "Francisco Velenzuela bought an express wagon from you yesterday for ten cents; he sold it before supper time to the secondhand man around the corner for fifty. I think the secondhand man sent him here in the first place."

"I know they do it sometimes, but how am I to prevent it?"

"Have one price for everybody. If

a child hasn't money enough, let him work out the difference. Put him at department-store repairing. It might pay you to hire a manual-training teacher to instruct a class of them."

"Miss Paige," said the merchant, "your wages are twenty-five a week from now on, and we'll make the contract for as many years as you will sign for."

"Oh, no," protested Cynthia; "I'm not worth it. Besides, it is only your brother's plan warmed over; and, thirdly, I am sure that you can't afford to pay me so much. The way you have to do your own work, and the little you get from your rent——"

"Miss Cynthia," interrupted her employer, "would you like to know why I started this shop?"

Miss Paige looked up.

"If you don't mind——"

She hesitated, for something had made Tavener very pale.

"I would like to tell you," he said. "The first few months after I left the hospital were torment. My friends made something of a hero of me for a few days, and then wished me away. I rented apartments out on Figueroa Street, and stayed in them. The dull horror of those days of self-imprisonment I shall never forget. I used to walk in the evening. Grown people would avoid me, but there was a family of children next door who seemed to like me. One evening a little girl brought me her doll to fix. That gave me the idea of the shop. It isn't the money—I have plenty of that—but the work I do with my hands keeps me well and sane, and now with you here to help me"—he checked himself, and, after a barely perceptible pause, finished gayly—"the toy mender will once more live like a man."

The week before Christmas was a busy one, but with her tired body Cynthia also brought home each night a most contented mind. The weather was as perfect as only California weather can be, and Cynthia's mother, influenced perhaps as much by her daughter's success as by the days of golden sunshine, improved wonderfully.

The day before Christmas, Tavener characteristically put up a sign on his door, announcing that, in observance of Christmas Eve, the store would close at five instead of six. Indeed, as he was to give a dinner to the people of the house at seven, even that left him little enough time.

Strictly speaking, it could scarcely be said that any one person gave the dinner. The toy mender provided the supplies, and the meal was to be cooked and eaten in his apartments; but, following the new rule of the house, everybody helped in its preparation. An old lady with rheumatism and a small remittance made the soup; a Mexican refugee broiled the fish, and his sister made a sauce for it, à la Mazatlan; Cynthia's mother, who had come over for the occasion, roasted the turkey; the second violin of a second-rate orchestra made the salad; and a blind basket maker froze the ice cream.

Of course, the dinner was a great success. What though the potatoes had a superabundance of salt, and the sauce on the barracuda almost took the skin from poor Mrs. Paige's mouth? There are other things to a dinner than food.

"I wonder if you know what this has meant to me?" said Tavener. "And it was you who did it."

"Think what it meant to all of us," responded Cynthia. "You not only made these poor people happy; you made them brilliant. That was you!"

They were standing in the open doorway. The light from the transformed

workroom brought out the fine profile of the man's face, the scar was obscured in the shadow toward the hall. Cynthia, leaning against a lintel, was looking up at him, and there was no repugnance in her eyes.

"Cynthia," he said—he had never called her that before—"you know, in the story of 'Beauty and the Beast,' Beauty learned, in time, to love the Beast, in spite of his—his outward form. Was that too improbable—even for a fairy tale?"

Cynthia felt a constriction in her breast. She tried to answer, but could not.

"Little girl," went on the man, "I know just what I am asking you, and I hardly know why I dare do it; but I have loved you ever since I saw you sitting in the shadows in the big church. That, you know, was ages ago. Tell me, is this fairy tale of mine only that—and to be forgotten?"

Cynthia put her hand upon his arm. There were tears in her eyes.

"Who am I," she replied, "to be called 'Beauty'? As for you—see, I am looking into your face, and there is nothing there but what is good and noble and greatly to be desired."

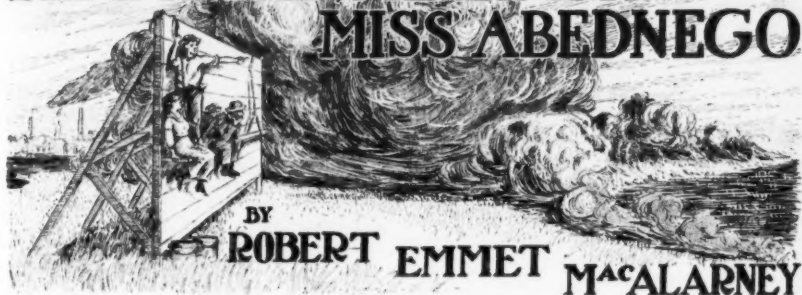
He caught her in his arms.

"You are my 'Beauty'—my beautiful Christmas present—mine, always!"

"I am sure it comes," said Cynthia, with a little contented sigh, "as your brother said a Christmas present should always come—from the heart."



SHADRACH MESHACH AND MISS ABEDNEGO



BY
ROBERT EMMET MACALARNEY

T took several weeks of progressive malnutrition to make Larry Leonard desert his studio aerie, just south of Washington Square, and get a job with B. & H. Higgins, Inc., known among the members of their profession as the "Big Billboard Brothers."

Every craft has its own academicians, whether it holds an annual salon or no. After all, the real test of what you do is how your associates rate your work. B. & H. Higgins, Inc., was the Whistler of the hoardings. When we say "hoardings," we mean just that. The firm trifled with no lilliputian display cards in surface car or subway. As Ben Higgins, senior partner, once remarked to a young hireling fresh from college—who had a pretty knack for detail and believed in cold-cream stanzas that would scan:

"It's all right, son, this ad-for-art's-sake thing; but that ain't what we're paid for."

Their line was the "loud stuff"; they went in for the ten-story blank wall within gaze of Broadway, for acres of painted tin topped by arc-light reflectors for night use in the playhouse belt, for making the tracks of a dozen railroads to Manhattan's suburbs mere chutes between spectrum-splotted miles of board.

H. Higgins, junior partner, looked after the electric-sign displays. He had worn overalls in a power house before

the brotherly business stake had been accumulated, and what he didn't know about extorting bargain-counter rates in ohms and amperes was not worth cramming up on. Hotel patrons, in the Longacre Square district, have spread the fame of H. Higgins' shaving tragedy, worked out in seven-colored tungsten bulbs. Perhaps you saw it last winter yourself, going to theater or cabaret supper—the gigantic face that frowned as it gashed its cheek with an old-fashioned blade—the way Higgins made the blood stream, with crimson incandescents, was nothing short of a masterpiece—and then the grin, as the effigy scraped with "Jones' Safe Safety." It was a hit, down to the way the hand shook off that bit of lather after the last stroke. Higgins lay awake nights, figuring out how to lend this last touch; he finally accomplished it by dropping a bunch of loose-ended wires, with low-candle-powered lamps that flickered in rapid alternation. Remember how you ducked involuntarily on the sidewalk, to dodge that blob of soap and water?

Horace Marsh, the collegian with a taste for detail, had listened to his employer patiently.

"Pine boards—cover 'em with tin when you can, and fireproof paint 'em when you can't," B. Higgins had grunted, smiting his desk. "Just pine boards and tanks of paint—red and yellow preferred—that's what's made us

money. And don't you forget it, son, we pay bigger wages to the men that do our pictures than most of the magazines."

"And splash at a ten-league canvas
With brushes of comet's hair."

Young Marsh quoted the couplet automatically.

"What's that?" asked the senior partner.

The collegian recited the verses again. "Kipling, you know," he explained. "What's he pushing?" asked B. Higgins. "Can we get him to do some jingles for Latham's Lily Lard? I've just closed for a hundred and fifty board walks in Jersey."

"Board walk" was what B. & H. Higgins, Inc., called their largest-size suburban-railroad-track daub.

The collegian, who was a pretty fair juvenile philosopher, shook his head.

"You couldn't get Kipling," he replied. "He's busy boosting Albion—Great Britain, you know."

"Them English preparations is no good," said Higgins. "The backers always gets cold feet before they blow their first hundred thousand. Ten to one, you've got to sue 'em to get 'em to make good, and by that time the thing you're plugging has gone and flivvered."

Whereupon the collegian had withdrawn tactfully. None the less, in the Academy of Ads, B. & H. Higgins were recognized fellows, *cum laude*. Their bank account proved it.

Larry Leonard himself had not emerged from the campus jungles of New Haven so very long ago. He had been thrust upon an over-ballasted world along with a few hundred others, members of the class of nineteen-eleven. And, straightway, he had taken seven hundred and fifty dollars, left over from Aunt Carrie's legacy—he had saved cannily all the way through Yale for that—and journeyed, second class, to the Latin Quarter.

The seven hundred and fifty had been elastic enough to be stretched, thinly, over twelve months of feverish canvas smearing. Then the taut leather of credit string had snapped, with a recoil that

had stung. He had come back steerage, not minding the smells as much as ordinarily he might have done, because he fell in with a family of good-hearted Italians, who fed him their own spaghetti, and allowed him to sketch their flock of *bambinos* to his heart's content.

Since then, his habitat had been the unfinished top story of the Schneider Stocking Company's building, from which he had a fine view of the Judson Memorial cross at night. He got his quarters—and a north light, as well as an excellent north wind—for punching a time clock on each floor at midnight, peering for fire or thieves in every loft. He didn't mind it so much, except in the winter, when prowling over nine floors in a bath robe was apt to be chilly.

When Leonard sold a sketch to *Strife* or a colored cartoon to *Fudge*, he ate at the Black Dog, a half block away, almost up against the Bleecker Street L. station. Here, many future academicians of his craft, forgathered of an evening, to talk shop.

Among them, now and then, would come a man who somehow had accumulated sufficient funds to pay the membership fees of the Salmagundi Club. This man would bring tickets for the next club hanging—once in a while, for the Salmagundi "get-away" dinners—and the latest gossip of the studios. On such evenings, Leonard and his Black Dog confrères would forget that dollars were made from cents, and not from unsold canvases. They would rap briskly on the tables, and bid Julian, the *maitre d'hôtel*, to bring more *carafons*—and charge it. To Julian's credit, if not prudence, be it recorded that usually he would obey.

But now Leonard had not supped at the Black Dog for a fortnight. *Strife* had turned down his last batch of drawings; *Fudge* had avowed itself smothered by a profusion of cartoons. Crawling up and down those nine flights of stairs in Schneider's Stocking Factory was exercise that demanded at least training fare. So B. & H. Higgins, Inc., had enlisted another recruit for its Foreign Legion—as the Black Dog tables styled the insatiate billboard machine.

No man ever "got a job" with B. Higgins, in the eyes of the Black Dog. "The Foreign Legion got him." That was the way they put it. Take it from the most ancient Black Doggers—and they know—the real Legion, with the tragic flavor of Cigarette and the White Pheasant that Ouida has woven through it for all time, enrolls no more splintered ambitions and poisoned self-esteem than Manhattan's scaffold-and-paint-pot battalion.

"They never come back to us," your old Black Dogger will declare. "Only one did. I remember him. His fingers looked like a motorman's. He wept over his third carafon, and confessed that he couldn't feel that he was holding a brush unless it had a handle as big as a mop. 'And they pay you money for doing it!' he kept saying. 'I can't smoke cigarettes any more—I've smeared so many green and red boxes on the sides of houses. It's hell, and yet it's healthy.'"

Larry Leonard joined the Latham's Lily Lard detail. B. Higgins himself gave the order.

"We've got a contract for a hundred and fifty board walks in Jersey," he explained. "Going to make a killing along the D., L. & W. tracks on the meadows. I want you to do me a couple of samples. The tin frames are up, this side of Harrison. Marsh'll give you the dope sheet. You'll get to like it after a while. All you chaps that can't sell your stuff to the picture shops hate it at first. But let me tell you, young feller, there's a heap worse things than setting comfortable on a ladder, seeing the colors stick as you slap 'em on. It has the ribbon counter skinned a mile. Are you on?"

"Oh, I'm on, right enough!" replied Leonard. "I can't very well get off."

Young Horace Marsh's smile showed the tint of sympathy as he hauled some sketches and doggerel out of a drawer.

"So you got the Jersey meadows?" he remarked. "What did you say to make the old man sore on you?"

"What do you mean?" asked Leonard. "He didn't seem at all sore. He said I'd like it after a while."

"You didn't look enough like a pan-handler," Marsh went on unemotionally. "I know how he behaves. You see, he used to be a ballyhoo man for a one-ring circus out West; afterward, he hoboed it—he might even have yegged it, for all I know—East, where he knew his brother had a job. He slept on park benches for a while, getting his hand-out on the bread line the same as any other 'bo. And, like a lot of other down-and-outs who have pulled themselves up by their boot straps, he hates a thoroughbred."

"Thanks," said Leonard. "I suppose good form demands that I inquire why you're sticking around where you're so cordially detested."

The ad man grinned.

"He won't admit it, but he needs me," he replied. "I stand for a lot on the surface, but underneath I usually have my way. And every time I've asked for more salary, he's come across. It's up to me to stick. I might be a partner some day; you never can tell. But he sure took a hate to you, Leonard. Have you ever wandered over the Jersey meadows between here and Newark, picking trailing arbutus and anemones, those sweet and shy wild flowers, listening to the call of the thrush and the robin?"

"If you're as good an ad man as you are a kidder," interrupted the expatriate from the Black Dog, "you earn your money."

"Why, a meadows job is the Black Hole of Calcutta for the sign painter," Marsh informed him seriously. "What isn't square miles of railroad ties and ballast and gas tanks is scummy marsh, rank cat-tails, grass that would dull a machete—and mosquitoes. It's the ancestral home of the *culex pungens*. All the mosquitoes on earth are immigrants from the Jersey meadows. There's malaria in every whiff from the Passaic and Hackensack. But you do get a fine view of the penitentiary at Snake Hill. That's one thing—you do get a view."

"On the level, you give me the creeps," said Leonard. "I've ridden over the thing, going out to the Essex County Country to golf, and I know

what the fertilizer works near the roundhouse smell like. But I've never had any one sing me a song about it all before."

Young Marsh grinned.

"Oh, you'll stick it out for a few days. I'm not saying you won't. But meanwhile put your name down with some envelope-addressing shop or aluminum cooking-utensil agency. No one but the plain 'bo daubers can hold down a meadows job. You've got to have your skin so full of booze that every skeeter jab gets automatic alcohol antiseptic treatment."

"I'll bet you——" The artist on studio leave paused. "No, I won't," he said. "I couldn't wager you car fare."

"Here's the dope." Marsh tossed the roll of sketches and doggerel across the drawing table. "Good luck! And don't be gay with your matches if you smoke. Every other year some idiot touches off the grass; you'd think it was a sure-enough prairie fire to see it lick up the dry stuff. They found two charred bums last fall. Evidently they had been heading for the Passaic, but the cat-tail cinders beat them to it."

"*Morituri te!*" Larry Leonard flung over his shoulder.

"I get you," young Marsh laughed back at him. "I haven't been so many moons away from senior year that I've forgotten what that means."

This had been a Tuesday afternoon, in mid-September. Wednesday morning, early, found Leonard waving adios to the minor cog in the B. & H. Higgins machinery who had driven him from Hoboken in a wagon containing ladders, a spare pair of pulley hooks, some extra yards of rope, and divers pots of paint and oil.

"When will you be coming back for me?" he called.

"When'll I what?" shouted the teamster.

"When will you pick me up?"

"Don't make me laugh, I've got a sore lip. What do you think we're going to do—send a taxi after you? Beat it for the tracks and a freight when you knock off. Nobody holds the watch on you out here, neither. That's some-

thing. And no bum's going to steal your paints. Just diamond-hitch your ropes and beat it."

The curses with which he assailed his tired horse floated back with the foul breath of the fertilizer works, wafted by a southwest zephyr. It was a smell altogether different, sniffed in the open, than when its taint was filtered through a closed car window.

Leonard lit his pipe, and surveyed the huge panel of white tin, a hundred yards distant, across rustling reed billows. Between the browning stalks he could glimpse greenish water; much of the distance must be quagmire, and the teamster had declined profanely to help carry ropes and ladders out to the iron uprights. A disreputable-looking crow, scouting from its Snake Hill feeding ground, sailed slowly past. There was something unwontedly malicious in its harsh brace of croaks.

"If the darned bird knew I'd slaved for a year in the Latin Quarter—for this—he'd probably give the Yale cheer," Leonard announced to the nearest cat-tails, their brown tops mangy and bursting.

He pulled out his watch—just seven, and going to be grilling when the sun got higher. For the present, barring the fertilizer-works smell, forgetting that he was anchored for eight hours, the meadows were worth painting, if Latham's Lily Lard wasn't. Reds and pinks touched the poisonous river waters. Dawn smote the weathered brick wall of a distant roundhouse, conjuring up a luminous maroon that would have made Titian's fingers quiver. The very wisps of smoke that knotted and untwisted, far to the north—where the first of the hordes of sleep-unsatisfied workers plunged toward town—draped the vista as a filmy scarf is twisted about an unframed canvas.

"Ouch!"

Leonard's head rocked with the impact of his right palm. The first vidette of the *culex pungens* army, in dying, had reported progress. It, and the memory of young Marsh's grin, bestirred the exile from the Black Dog. Luckily he had worn a pair of waterproof hunt-

ing boots. He blessed them as he staggered through the morass toward the trade escutcheon of B. & H. Higgins, Inc.

At least, he was far enough from the tracks to avoid furnishing suburbanite entertainment, as the expresses began to pile up in front of the tunnel. It was not likely that auction boards in the smoking car would extract a laugh from his flounderings. He looked at his dollar watch as he tightened the last guy rope. Ten o'clock! A hot breeze had sprung up; his arms shook from the racking of unaccustomed toil.

As far as his cinder-rimmed eyes could stare, the reed desert had become a prairie, a thousand engines its snorting buffaloes, each spitting its individual fumes into the already reeking atmosphere. Yonder, along the plank road, motors shot Orangeward—for golf, doubtless, with luncheon and something cool to drink at the nineteenth hole. Twice, automobiles purred past, using a short cut, within biscuit toss of his ladder perch. Leonard marveled at the hardihood of the eager chauffeurs who employed this route, most of it rotten corduroy.

The railroad drawbridge opened and shut like some gigantic spider stretching its legs. The glare fairly made the paint pots bubble. When the workhouse siren, over at Snake Hill, screeched the signal for noon, Leonard drew out of his pocket two ham sandwiches which he had bought before crossing the ferry. After eating, he thirsted mightily—but he had not thought to transport water. Only a dread of Marsh's sneer prevented him quitting then and there. As it was, he sucked dry lips and slapped on his colors with an energy that made the framework tremble. Every sticky square inch of tin was fuzzy with dead mosquitoes. The Black Dog exile's face was puffy with their stings; his swollen hands bulged over his brushes. But he dabbed linseed oil upon his wounds, swearing gently as he slapped away; he found that the latter helped him to endure.

Horace Marsh had evolved the ad

"dope sheet" for this commodity of hog that was to be pushed. There was a dinner table, with a delighted husband leaning over his plate to tell his wife how much he had enjoyed the prandial pie. There was a cubist color scheme, and a heroic fragment of landscape seen through the window. The hero wore evening clothes, the pie virtuoso being garbed in a ball gown, with a generous allotment of gems. Embossed upon the cloth, due south of the hero's butter dish, was this offspring of Calliope:

"I never ate such pies as these,"

Said Abelard to Heloise.

"They're made with Latham's Lily Lard,"

Said Heloise to Abelard.

It was after four by the time the tortured colorist had laid down the skeleton of his Brobdingnagian sketch. He was stirring away at his vermilion when he heard a hail.

"Say, pal, you better beat it!"

Trudging along the short-cut road, leaping from hummock to corduroy fragment with the skill of a goat, was a bearded hobo. He halted beneath the ladder, flapping his hands at the insect swarms.

"Better beat it!" he advised. "The grass is afire this side of the bone works, and the wind's blowin' this way. That's what drove me back. I was headin' for Newark, but I couldn't git by to the tracks."

Leonard focused aching eyes upon the southwest. What he had taken for heat haze was, plainly enough now, the smudge of blazing reeds. What young Marsh had told him often happened had happened again. As he stared, there was a rippling flash, the blaze surrounded a telegraph pole, licking its entire length, and then dropping back as if satisfied.

"C'mon, friend," urged the tramp. "It's comin' fast. We c'n just make the drawbridge comfortable. This here roost of yours is tin, but it'll make a hot grand stand for fireworks. Them wooden signs over yonder's sure to go. C'mon!"

The smoke roll grew thicker; so thick that as a train sped through it, engine and cars were lost to view. Leonard

noticed that every telephone and telegraph pole within eyeshot was charred by old fire marks. The dry reeds about B. Higgins' new "board walk" would burn unhindered by the scummy water in which they were rooted. He fumbled with his pulleys, beginning to lower the ladder. The tramp splashed nearer.

"We c'n pull her up again," he said. "Leave the paint pots on her. This here rope is wire wove; mebbe it'll stand a scorchin'."

"Say," began Larry Leonard, "I'm much obliged. They told me that sometimes the grass caught on fire. I've been careful not to throw matches among the cat-tails after lighting my pipe."

The hobo grinned.

"There ain't no fire c'mishioner on these here meadows," he said. "If there was, they'd put spark consumers on the railroad engines. That's what touches 'em off. Cripes! Listen to that!"

Both of them turned toward the southwest, whence came a sound like the crackle of a thousand breaking twigs. The crows over at Snake Hill were circling, cawing in remonstrance. A locomotive whistled; fine ashes began to fall. They would have been making for the drawbridge in another second had there not slid out of the murk a motor car, with a girl at the steering wheel. The hobo ran toward it, yelling something that Leonard could not understand; the girl braked suddenly upon the rotten corduroy.

She waved her hand.

"All right! Hurry!" she called.

Then he knew that his friend of the road had held her up for passage. The cheek of the thing maddened him.

"Hurry!" called the girl again.

This time she waved her hand directly at him. As he stumbled toward the car, he saw that she had copper-colored hair and a tiptilted nose, and that she did not seem the least bit afraid, although the cat-tail sparks were dropping thickly.

"This is an outrage!" he shouted. "Quick, drive on! You've got a bad road here!"

The tramp had wrenched open the

tonneau door and leaped in, beside a bag of golf clubs. Leonard himself was on the running board. The girl released the brakes. The wheels spun with a hiss in the muck, but did not move. Behind them the crackle of the meadows grew ever more insistent.

The hobo lurched out beside Leonard, who was kneeling to see what was the matter.

"Stalled, by God!" he muttered. "This ain't no time to play garage. Grab the girl and c'mon!" He loped down the oozy path. "C'mon!" he flung back at them.

The girl eyed the puffy-faced young man in the blue flannel shirt.

"Do you think you'll be able to fix it?" she asked. "I've been told never to take this short cut, but I had a dinner engagement." She glanced over her shoulder at the advancing smoke cloud. "Really, it is quite appalling. One isn't accustomed to meet a prairie fire within sight of skyscrapers."

"I think you had better get out," said Leonard. "I don't know much about automobiles, but I know enough to be sure that I'd have to prowl underneath the gears for ten minutes or so."

"And we haven't ten minutes to spare, have we?" She jumped out lightly. Then she gave a tiny scream as her feet sank in the muck. "Gracious! It's like a quicksand! I'm up to my ankles!"

Bracing one boot upon a hummock, he drew her beside him. But the mud had swallowed both buckskin pumps. She stood in white stockings upon the reeds. The stockings were muddy; the edge of her white golfing skirt was muddy, too. She clung to his arm desperately.

"Now what have I done?" she asked.

The sign-painter neophyte was of average sturdiness. He could have carried her to the drawbridge—if there had been time. But he could not carry her the few hundred yards that stretched between them and the safety oasis of railroad ballast rapidly enough to elude the galloping ripple of red. He knew that it was but a thin ripple, that there was no stancher blaze behind it.

But for them, marooned in this desert of cat-tails, it would serve as well as a conflagration. He recalled what young Marsh had said about "two charred bums."

Snake Hill's crows were screaming more persistently, but he could not mark their wheeling; the smoke cloud was closing in. Off to the right, a chorus of locomotive whistles had begun; the siren of the penitentiary wailed an additional warning. A spark seared his wrist.

He grasped the girl by both shoulders.

"Listen," he said. "This is going to be close. We've got to stick it out here. No screaming, remember!"

He had swung her up, and was staggering toward his ladder, when he heard a hoarse hallooing; it was his friend, the hobo, running back.

"Cripes!" he shouted. "Cripes! Ain't you goin' to bring the goil and c'mon?"

Then, seeing what the flannel-shirted youth was doing, he splashed beside him.

"Here, pal," he gasped. "It's a-gainin' on us. Lemme help tote her."

This was no time to tell his returned ally that he had misjudged him. But as they tore at the knotted guy ropes Leonard coughed:

"I thought you'd gone for good. I want to—take back—what I thought."

The ladder dropped with a rush that shook the slight iron supports. The panhandler gathered up the paint and oil buckets; he tossed them toward the river in slopping arcs of color.

"No need of puttin' more coal on the fi-ery furnace," he said. "Now, lady, hold tight! Go in' up!"

The tin signboard swayed and groaned as they hauled slowly and evenly—until they clung to the rim, facing their pursuer. In spaces cleared by the back draft, they could see telegraph poles, sagging and decrepit. In a moment the flame gust would reach the car.

Leonard touched the girl's fingers.

"Hold tight, and shut your eyes and mouth when the smoke hits us," he ordered. "It will last for only a mo-

ment. The fire can't reach us; only we musn't swallow any sparks."

"Cripes!" muttered the tramp from his end of the ladder. "Look what's comin'."

Out from the smoke blot, shying at the stalled motor as if it were some new danger of the meadows, galloped a goat, the bell about its neck jangling. Its sharp hoofs flung up the muck in a shower of divots.

"Some ginney's pet hunted tin cans too far," said the panhandler. "He's a goner. Duck when the auto gits afire! Gasoline scatters!"

Leonard felt the girl's hand tremble in his own.

"I don't mind the car," she whispered. "Only what if there's something else, alive, out there?"

"It wouldn't be breakin' no law if one of you was to turn loose a bit of prayin'," complained the tramp. "We're in the fi-ery furnace, all right. There's somethin' in the Book about the fi-ery furnace. I heard a whiskered party at the Bowery Mission say so."

Leonard found his puffed cheeks creasing with a silly smile—in spite of the girl whose fingers quivered; in spite of the menacing wave of flame.

"Three of them, you know," he heard himself declaiming. "Shadrach, Meshach, and——" He flung his laughter in the face of the red ripple. "Shadrach, Meshach, and Miss Abednego!" he shouted.

"Cripes!" yelled the man at the end of the ladder. "You'll dump us!"

The girl had tottered against the flannel shirt. Leonard gripped the sticky tin with his left hand, holding her with the other. He shut his eyes as the racing crackle reached the motor. He kept them closed through the jarring explosion and the seeming age of scorching that followed. The girl was quiet enough; and then—a whiff of air that was not from Avernus.

"Cripes!" the hobo was saying.

The red ripple was a rod beyond them, carrying with it the billow of murk and sparks. The locomotive chorus and the penitentiary siren still sounded; but the Snake Hill crows

seemed to croak relief that the blaze was soon to beat itself out upon railroad ballast and drawbridge. Only the escutcheon of B. & H. Higgins, Inc., remained stanch, though smuttled and blistered. Half a hundred wooden signboards were torches along the D., L. & W. tracks. The cat-tails and rushes around the iron supports of their perch had vanished; the mark of the hungry flame was almost at the ladder rungs.

"C'mon, pal. Lower away, if you c'n do it with one hand. She's all in. It's better that way. Lucky I got a bit of redeye in me jeans."

They forced some of the vile whisky between the girl's clenched teeth. She sat up after a while, leaning against the flannel shoulder, seeing first the purple countenance of the tramp thrust anxiously toward her own.

"It was hot, without any shoes," she murmured. "It hurt—but I wasn't afraid—much."

"Lady, you're a dead-game sport!" The panhandler stood erect to say it, sweeping off his grimy cap with a flourish. "C'n you git her back to town yourself?" he asked Leonard.

"Wait, please!" the girl cried. "But I can't, after all. My hand bag was in the motor."

The panhandler shook his head gravely.

"This here wasn't no pay stunt," he said. "It was a sportin' proposition, backin' nerve against cold feet. Cold feet didn't win—or I'd be hatin' to chalk my monicker on the tanks goin' west. If you want to git square, lady, let me shake your mitt."

Up rose the stocking-footed girl, with both hands outstretched.

"Thank you, ever so much, and good-by—Meshach."

"Good luck to you, Miss—what was her name in the fi-ery furnace?"

He turned to Leonard. But she told him.

"Miss Abednego! There were three of them, and three of us, you know."

"I ain't much on them Yiddish labels," the hobo explained.

He drew B. Higgins' hireling aside, while he exchanged grips.

"Listen, pal," he whispered. "Sometimes the storybook heiresses comes true. But git a move on. Wimmen fergits—even after fi-ery furnaces. An' if you an' her takes your rice-an'-oldshoe hike out along the Pennsy, before the Allegheny blizzards, you'll find my monicker chalked on a tank in the middle of Hosshoe Curve, with a word fer the two of you. The Hosshoe Curve, remember. Lots of rice parties take that trip." He glanced furtively at the copper-haired girl, who was staring into the sunset. "She ain't lookin'," he muttered. "Slip me a bit of change, pal. I'll need a drink bad."

Larry Leonard fumbled in his trousers pocket and produced a dollar bill—his last dollar bill.

"I wish it were more," he said.

"It's twenty beers," replied the panhandler. "It's a bank account fer me. S'long!"

"It's been like the storybooks," said the girl, as Leonard splashed back to her.

"To-morrow will be a different story. I'll have to begin all over again." He pointed toward the blistered tin sign. "B. Higgins is going to make a killing for Latham's Lily Lard."

"For what?"

"I'll enlighten you in rhyme." He recited young Marsh's doggerel. "It's a good thing I learned it by heart; the copy is burned up."

"Why is lard always funny?" she asked. "You know that's father."

"What's father?"

"Latham's Lily Lard. He won't mind about the motor when I tell him that one of his own signs saved his daughter."

"I'll apologize after I've carried you to the drawbridge, Miss Latham. But, before we start, let me remark that whatever humor lard may have inspired me with in the past has vanished. It means a dollar and a half a day."

"Don't call me Miss Latham until—until to-morrow, Shadrach," she requested.

Larry Leonard returned to the Black Dog in time for Thanksgiving wassail. But the mark of the Foreign Legion was on him; even Julian was forced to

admit that. He was too briskly businesslike, too slightly interested in canvases that would not sell.

"You see," the oldest Black Dogger confided to his carafon neighbor, "it's the mark of the beast. He went out from us hating the word dollar."

"But it'll be an hour before an accommodation picks you up," a puzzled conductor of the Limited told the couple who insisted upon debarking at Tunnel Junction.

"It's all right," said Lawrence Leonard. "We want to wait."

A thin snow apron lay upon the knees of the Alleghenies. The Horseshoe Curve was pricked out in white—gorge, rocks, and trees. A quarter mile past the station rose a green water tank.

"That must be it," said Leonard. "Do you mind walking over icy ballast that far?"

"I should in my stockings," his wife replied.

"He did travel west!"

Leonard pointed to a red-chalked square that stood out among the hobo scrawls. The square said:

HOPE STORY BOOK COME TRUE.

Meshack.

(New York Jim.)

"Lift me up, Larry," the copper-haired bride commanded.

And while her husband held her, she chose a clear space beneath New York Jim's inscription, and printed:

GOOD LUCK—NEW YORK JIM.

Miss Abednego.

(Her Monicker.)

They went back, hand in hand, singing. Young Marsh—he had been at

the wedding, and so had B. & H. Higgins, Inc.—had found that his doggerel went splendidly to the chorus of a new song at the Casino.

"Bless you, my children," he had chanted at the breakfast. "Every couple isn't lucky enough to have their epithalamium written and set to music before they have been introduced."

And—it has been remarked before that young Marsh's sense of humor was keen—he bribed the organist to play the Fire Music from "The Valkyrie" during the ceremony. Neither Father Latham, nor B. & H. Higgins, Inc., however, appreciated this touch; they didn't know what it was.

"I never ate such pies as these,"

Said Abelard to Heloise.

"They're made with Latham's Lily Lard,"

Said Heloise to Abelard.

The junction baggageman heard them caroling the ditty as they came. It rang clear and joyous into the gorge. The trunk virtuoso slammed a brace of suit cases upon his truck to let them know that he was on earth. But they did not heed him.

"Good old Meshack!" said Larry Leonard.

"He hoped the storybook come true," said Mrs. Leonard.

There were tears in her eyes as she lifted her face to be kissed.

"Now, wouldn't that bite you!" snarled the baggageman—a round dozen of drummer's sample cases had made him irritable. "It's cold as Greenland, and that girl's got on pumps."

You see, he didn't know that the snowy Horseshoe Curve wasn't the Curve at all, but the Jersey meadows, with the furnace breath of a September cat-tail fire; he didn't know that the scrawled water tank wasn't a water tank, but an altar; nor did he guess that the silly quatrain the strangers sang, as they walked along the tracks, was really a hymn.

He knew none of these things—and yet they were true.

The Little Pink Girl

by ETHEL TRAIN



IT is easy to fix the epoch of the Little Pink Girl. She was born after the craze for golf had subsided somewhat, and at just about the time that auction was succeeding plain bridge. When dancing came in, and everything else was done for and forgotten, she was seven. That winter everybody in the whole world was dancing. Some people danced for their figures, because they were too fat; others danced because they were stiff in the joints, and wanted to limber up a bit. Some danced because they fancied that they looked well that way; and many, many others because other people did, and so they thought they must.

But the Little Pink Girl danced because she couldn't help it. She danced out of her bed and into her bath, out of her bath and into her fleecy, fluttery petticoats—for at seven she still wore petticoats, because little girls don't need to be slinky. She danced while Hortense was buttoning her coat up to the chin, and while she was having her hat put on. She floated down the staircase on her way to school as you and I used to do long ago in dreams, just touching the handrail with her finger tips. She hovered past the big butler, who held open the door for her, with Hortense hurrying in her wake; and as she went by, she flashed at him such a look of comradeship, and of early-morning happiness, that, when she had gone, he did not shut the door immediately—though at other times he was very particular about not letting the cold air into

the house—but stood looking after her thoughtfully until she had turned the corner. For the Little Pink Girl and the big butler were intimate friends.

The Little Pink Girl was intimate friends with everybody—with the furnace man, who wore an ash-covered derby on the back of his head; with the under laundress, whose name was not even known upstairs; with the footman who was leaving, and the footman who had just come to take his place; with the cook, who dressed beautifully all in white, like a trained nurse; and with the parlor maid, who had hair like spun gold under her pretty little cap.

The Little Pink Girl had two older sisters, just as Cinderella had, but there the analogy ended. The sisters never cared for dolls after the Little Pink Girl arrived. She began pink. The first time they ever saw her she was in a pink bassinet, with a pink thing over her. And at first sight of her, the mother that was folded up somewhere deep down in each of them woke up, and never went to sleep again. So the Little Pink Girl had no less than three perfectly good mothers. It was a great many, of course, but she found no difficulty in using them all. One came in handy when she fell down and hurt herself; another when she broke her doll's head; a third when she wanted her hand held in the dark. If the Little Pink Girl happened to be in trouble, she had only to look up to see a pair of arms stretched out; she had only to run toward them, to be folded to one breast or another.

Love did not spoil the Little Pink Girl. She gave as good as she got. She was a very spendthrift of this great leveler of social distinctions, a past master in the art of fusing classes. The big butler and the owner of the house, for example, were both very dignified personages, indeed, who took themselves so seriously that without her there might have been between them a great gulf fixed. But when the latter, descending of a Saturday morning into the front hall, happened to spy the former, all dressed up in his tail coat, anxiously bending over a diminutive perambulator into which he had just fitted a much-worn Teddy bear, what could he do but halt and remain stealthily where he was, for fear of disturbing these operations?

After the pillows had been smoothed, and a small, not too clean blanket shaken out, he might venture to continue on his way, for now it was only fair that he should have *his* turn. Under these circumstances, what more natural than that a warm smile of comprehension should pass between the two, before the owner of the house faced right about, presenting his back, that his outer garment might be summarily elevated at the neck, and pulled down at the seam, which the Little Pink Girl had discovered to be the accepted and correct way of dealing with overcoats and their inmates?

"Oh, daddy!" the Little Pink Girl would implore, dancing all the time. "Won't you come for a walk with me?"

And then often she, and the owner of the house, and the Teddy bear, would all go along together; and the owner of the house would tell Hortense politely that they didn't need her just then, and he would end by wheeling the tiny, white carriage himself, because the Little Pink Girl had forgotten it in her joy, and it couldn't very well be left to block up the sidewalk.

Very much later in the morning, he would turn up at his office, and scowl and look preoccupied, and tell everybody that he had been unavoidably detained; and the office boy with the surreptitious grin and the big ears, the

stenographer with the wonderful puffs, the clerk, and the two partners, would all waste a great deal of what remained of the short half day in futile conjectures as to the cause of the delay.

The Little Pink Girl was decorated with a very high order of intelligence. She, of course, had no idea what the order was, so it didn't matter about discussing it before her. And every mother she had was determined that the mistakes that had been made in her own education should not be repeated in that of this blossom that had sprung up in the garden after the other flowers had got almost ready to be cut.

"I don't think she ought to go to a big school," said one of them with decision. "She'll get so slangy and fresh. You don't know how easy it is when you're with a lot of girls."

The younger, taller, prettier, and less original mother looked at her in scorn.

"*Imagine her ever getting slangy!*" she retorted, drawling her words.

Having little imagination herself, she enjoyed belittling this quality. As for the drawl, it was impossible to break her of it, though every one tried assiduously. They might just as well have let her alone, for it was going to break itself year after next, when fitted-in belts should have succeeded loose ones. Each phase of adolescence has its own little undesirable habits, varying with the individual. If they had but realized it, their Little Pink Girl was sure to come to them some day, too. But they fondly believed otherwise.

The third mother refrained from directing the conversation, because she was the eldest, and would not be mean enough to press so unfair an advantage. She fairly hated authority; it was always prone to interfere with getting light on interesting subjects. She kept hers where she could put her finger on it if need be, and let it go at that. This method differed from that of most of her associates, each of whom pampered hers like an overfed lap dog, dragging it out to be aired on every occasion.

The discussion as to schools grew hot, and did not lead to anything. The

eldest mother, reflecting that the question would not have to be settled for several years yet, since the primary course of education the Little Pink Girl was pursuing was good for that period, finally interposed mildly:

"Mrs. Goodhue Smith has just invited her to join little Goodhue's dancing class. It's taught by a Russian. The boys wear satin bloomers and Russian blouses. It's too sweet to see them, Mrs. Smith says."

"Huh!" cried the mother who had advocated small schools. "What do they learn, I'd like to know? No private class is thorough. She's going to be a corker at dancing! Oh, *do* send her to dancing school!"

"Yes, do!" the unimaginative mother seconded her eagerly. "Don't you remember how we wasted our time at Gwendolin Montagu's class? *Do* send her to dancing school! *Do!*"

"I was going to," answered the oldest mother deferentially, "if you agreed with me that it would be the best thing."

As a matter of fact, she had already declined seven invitations to private classes for the Little Pink Girl.

Thus it was decided by a unanimous vote that there was only one thing to be done. The Little Pink Girl was forthwith entered at dancing school; *the* dancing school; the only dancing school; the dancing school to which all those ever lured away to private classes for two generations had returned humbly; the school to which they could ever after point in triumphant refutation of those grumblers who discoursed to them upon national instability or the sweeping away of the city's landmarks.

The dancing lessons were held in a Louis XVI. ballroom, very large, with a door at each end. The mothers came in at one door, and the children, having first deposited their coats and hats in one of the dressing rooms downstairs, at the other. Between these doors the myriad lights of two huge chandeliers were dazzlingly reflected in a vast sea of highly polished floor, covered all over with cryptic squares and lines.

Just inside the visitors' entrance, under the gallery from which the gov-

ernesses and nurses leaned toward their charges, was a platform, and upon the platform stood a small, satinwood desk, with fresh flowers on it, and beside the desk a chair. To the children, this eminence was a throne, and upon the throne sat the godmother.

Sometimes, when they were new, they were just a little bit puzzled as to whether the lady was a godmother or a queen. She dressed very, very beautifully, in such clothes as they never beheld anywhere else, because as a rule grown-up people are very particular about saving theirs for occasions where children do not figure. But this lady wore hers for the children's pleasure, and her reward was the appreciation of eyes that saw true. They were such shimmery, soft clothes! She must be a queen—

Quick! Some one has tumbled on the slippery floor. A crumpled heap of muslin and lace—a hair ribbon awry—a scramble—some hard winks to wink away the tears—and lo! the throne is empty—two arms are about the sufferer, there are soothing words relative to Pond's Extract and a hurt knee, there are smiles, hair put back with gentle touch—and off flies the injured one blithely, with her partner, just as if nothing had occurred. In the newcomer's mind all doubts are settled, once and forever. No queen would leave her throne thus precipitately! It takes a godmother to do that!

At the beginning of the second lesson, the Little Pink Girl had already learned this and several other things. She had learned that, upon entering at the farther door, she must make a low curtsy to the teacher of dancing, who stood in evening dress, ready to welcome her. She knew that he would return it by a formal salutation, which was the most pleasing recognition of her personality yet vouchsafed her during the short span of her life.

Are children naturally barbarians? Come and watch the method of this man who is one of our city's best educators, and find out!

This greeting over, the Little Pink Girl had learned that with propriety

she might traverse the vast expanse, holding out her skirts on either side, and employing a method of progression designated as the "sliding walk." It consisted of turning your toes out and pointing your feet exquisitely, and it would get you where you wanted to go in a surprisingly short space of time.

There was one fearful moment of indecision at the outset, when the velvet benches seemed to be crowded with other people's mothers, and she couldn't make out where her own were sitting, because the faces were all blurs, being so very far off. But then a hand went up, and she had found them, and her heart leaped, and her face wreathed itself in smiles, and it required all her self-control to keep to that sliding walk, which was "*de rigueur*" and to avoid running, which would have been a terrible breach of decorum. You could run later, of course, but with music, and in double lines, holding your partner's hand. For here everything had a name, and a time, and a purpose of its own. And she welcomed order, because it was order accompanied by the free play of her muscles, and the stretching of her little, lithe body on its tiptoes, and gay music telling her exactly what to do and when to do it.

Not that the music told everybody these things. Some it only bothered, because they were so busy standing on the squares with their toes turned out that they just couldn't think of anything else. And if the signal was given to walk, it was hard enough to keep on the line at all without doing it in proper time. So they went along, absorbed in moving their feet as if they were treading on eggs, forgetting meanwhile all about their little gloved hands, which, cramped in a very fever of concentration, stuck out on either side, the fingers separated like the points of starfish.

Their ages varied from three to eight, and each had his own appeal—one awkward, one graceful, all utterly unself-conscious—cherubs in sailor colors, with anchors or without; angels straight from heaven, whether in blue bows or pink. What matter *what* they did, whether they stepped airily, or were im-

pelled by their own weight? If the young humming bird arouses tenderness, how about the little, fuzzy bear?

As the weeks went on, the spirit that lived in the feet of the Little Pink Girl became more and more submissive. It was a spirit that fed on rhythm, and stepped with ease among the values of notes like a cat amid delicate china. So it was nothing to the credit of the Little Pink Girl that she soon grasped so simple a thing as slide, slide, slide, *point*, slide, slide, slide, *point*, an achievement that shortly caused her to be promoted into the second class.

At the end of twenty lessons, the god-mother said that it would not do any harm for her to try to keep up with an older group; whereat there was much rejoicing among the mothers and a tiny sorrow at the heart of their child for the loss of a blue-trousered baby boy.

The first day, sitting in a tense phalanx, they perceived that they might have spared themselves all anxiety as to the success of the venture. The lesson opened with the familiar slide, slide, slide, *point*, greatly accelerated, for these were not babies who had to be given an interval to make their feet do what they were told. The Little Pink Girl danced off at the very first beat, in perfect time, and never even thought of lagging.

"It's so much easier fast!" she cried, coming back at last to sit all floppily at the feet of the mothers, with her hair rumpled against their knees. In two seconds she was up again, her body straight, her skirt between her finger tips, one little foot curved toward the floor, waiting till the signaling "one" of the measure should come around again. Not once did she make the mistake of starting on "two." For accuracy was the habit of her life.

Now the babies had had only two divisions of their class, the first and the second. But in this class there was a third. To get into the third you must have shown in a sort of trial by fire—that is, in a test that consisted of dancing alone once or twice about the room—that you had mastered the intricacies of the waltz. The reward was a badge

of light-blue ribbon. From her opening day forward, the Little Pink Girl was consumed by one thought, one desire. She must earn the right to wear that badge.

Rummaging about in her jewel box one afternoon, the snooping mother found a discarded one of her own, spotted, dusty, and creased.

"Put that on for a minute," she said indulgently to the Little Pink Girl, who had an insatiable desire for odds and ends of ribbon. "Let's see how you're going to look in it when you get one."

The Little Pink Girl drew back, and her eyes flashed.

"No," she said. "I won't."

The snooping mother locked the box and let the matter drop, though it was very rare for the Little Pink Girl to say she wouldn't. As a matter of fact, her mind was not on the Little Pink Girl just then; it was on boys. Thus she missed something that might have done her good. For the Little Pink Girl, who was in the very midst of the investigating age, the age of delight in small things, would yet rather have died than touch the empty emblem of an honor that was not lawfully hers.

By the time that April came, the Little Pink Girl had got to her seventh lesson in the older class. She was now numbered among the accustomed and experienced pupils. This was partly because the eldest mother had sat on a velvet bench, bolt upright, through every two-hour period, never taking her eyes from the little figure, and helping a great deal by the motion of her head. The other mothers thought that they had been just as faithful; they forgot that they had only watched *some* of the time. They adored the Little Pink Girl, but they had to have a moment or two occasionally for other interests. For the eldest mother, in comparison with the Little Pink Girl, other interests did not exist.

To-day, after the chauffeur, who was even bigger than the big butler, had carried the Little Pink Girl in his arms down the front steps, as he never allowed the pink-slipped feet to come in

contact with the pavement, they whirled downtown together, all four, and the Little Pink Girl, who was very impartial, took her turn upon the lap of each.

It was a soft spring afternoon; the avenue was alive with puffing motors, gayly painted busses, shop windows displaying summer openings, and pedestrians with coats thrown back. The traffic was heavy, and they were very nearly late. At last they turned into dancing-school street.

This was the liveliest, busiest street for blocks; at all hours of every day in the week, automobiles were discharging here their loads of bright-coated, swans-down-edged, white-fox-enveloped bits of humanity; vehicle doors were being opened and snapped to by a green-liveried old man who for forty years had lived in an atmosphere of children, so that his cheeks were unwrinkled, and his eyes shining clear, and his hand ever ready to hold back the too eager, who were in danger of falling on their noses in their hurry to get out.

The Little Pink Girl danced out of the automobile ahead of the mothers, which was allowed, although it was not manners, because at least three pairs of eyes were needed to keep track of her quick movements.

Then an unprecedented thing occurred. Instead of skipping up the brownstone steps as usual, without a backward look, she flashed leftward, and, pink ballet slippers and all, began running down the street.

Parallel with the long line of motors, in most undignified haste, the three mothers started in pursuit. The eldest was soon left far behind, not because she was too old to run, but because, it must be confessed, her skirt was of fashionable cut, and would barely allow her to take abbreviated Chinese steps. Panting, she halted and watched the other two, who were not thus impeded—their long legs flying, their hair floating out behind.

It was a curious spot for a butterfly chase—this brown, dusty, city street, with the listless chauffeurs, who had been sitting, one before another, in bored inaction, on the front seats of

their vehicles, suddenly shocked into animation by the sight of it.

Pretty soon the runners slowed down—hesitated—stopped. The butterfly had ceased its flight, and was hovering within easy reach of their hands. And just because they could have caught it unawares, they would not.

Halfway down the block—before some unpretentious doorways upon which small brass plates announced the occupation of these residences by various dentists, dressmakers, and corsetières—an organ grinder was making music. The Little Pink Girl's ear had caught the faint, distant strains of it, and it had attracted her irresistibly. It seemed as much a part of the awakening of the world as the daffodils in the florists' shops. The music inside was at least five minutes off—a long parenthesis of coat-removing, pulling off of leggings, confusion, crowd, must intervene before it could be reached; whereas *this* music could be had upon the instant, and without fuss. It was a dance tune, too. A queer, syncopated, cake-walky dance tune, deliciously new to the Little Pink Girl, though everybody else was sick to death of it.

The organ man was grinding it out with hopeful insistence, his right arm, in its frayed sleeve, swinging round and round and round. About him was gathered a rather large circle of adults. The Little Pink Girl paused on the outskirts of it, and it opened as if by magic to let her in. Friendly hands shoved her forward into the front ranks of the spectators, and she perceived for the first time that something was going on inside.

On the pavement, up and down the cleared space, backward and forward, swaying, swinging, and bending, stretching upon the tips of bare, grimy toes twice as high as the Little Pink Girl herself could stretch in her pink ballet slippers, a child was dancing. She was dressed in rags and tatters, which fluttered and flapped in the gentle breeze. An ecstasy of motion made her great, black eyes snap and crackle; her olive cheeks burned with the delight of it; the twists of her burnished, blue-black

hair were all alive. By the perfection of her rhythm the foolish melody was dignified; she was the very spirit of the dance.

The spectators, used to showing how they felt, clapped vociferously, laughing and slapping their knees.

"Go it, young un!" they cheered.

"Bully fer the kid! She's the goods, all right!"

The Little Pink Girl stood for a few seconds utterly still, save for the feverish clasp and unclasp of her gloved hands. A great light was kindling in her face—the light of professional enthusiasm. So might an impresario feel, if, walking the midnight street, he should suddenly recognize in the voice of some humble sidewalk singer the elements of genius.

The child paused, and the Little Pink Girl went up to her and took her hand.

"Come!" she invited.

That was all. In childhood no more is necessary. Nothing loath, the other came. And the organ grinder, with many flourishes, hat wavings, and gesticulations, and a kindly, sympathetic gleam in his swarthy face, indicated that he wished them Godspeed.

The mothers kept in the background, watching all the time. The two children believed that they had the pavement to themselves. No one spoke to them as they went along, shoulder to shoulder, rose-colored cloth against soiled cotton; moist, sticky hand clasped companionably in the smooth, gloved one. They neither walked nor ran, these two—they danced; the bare toes no nearer the pavement than the softly incased ones, but seeming to flash above it in light air.

Up the step of the dancing school they went, and past the doorman, who had orders to admit no strangers without a visitor's card—the waif of the pavements whom no visitor's card would have admitted, and the Little Pink Girl, who, without so much as by your leave, just brought her along in.

They went down to the dressing room—empty now, as it was late—and the Little Pink Girl, who had no time to waste for any mothers, burst through

her jacket and wriggled out of the gaiters—which she still wore over her shoes, because Hortense was afraid of sudden chills—and then, as was right and in order for those who desired to dance, piloted her charge up the children's staircase and in at the children's door.

The teacher of dancing had made about sixty welcoming bows that afternoon already. He was still standing near the door when a sight met his eyes that caused his limber spine to stiffen as if in a permanent paralysis.

On the threshold of his French salon—with its chandeliers, its huge, rose-curtained windows, its gay company of children in pink bows, in blue bows, in yellow bows, in slippers of white and bronze, gayly buckled, in diaphanous dresses, hand-embroidered, lace-covered, pleated, and frilled—an alien child was standing, a dark, piteous bird, with no bright plumage, a little lost wren in this tropical aviary.

A dull red flushed the face of the teacher of dancing, a dangerous glitter shone in his eye. His lips were about to move when something in the look of the Little Pink Girl, who was firmly holding the hand of the visitor, arrested the words upon them. She was looking at him in perfect confidence, the point of her sweet little chin upturned, her lips smiling. She was fairly bubbling over with triumphant joy.

"Oh," she whispered, "I have brought you the most wonderfullest little girl! She dances beau-ti-fully! I found her! I found her dancing in the street." Then, turning to her protégée: "Do you know how to make a curtsy? Look! It's this way."

The teacher of dancing, after a second's hesitation, made one bow; after two seconds, he made another. The number of bows he made in each year was almost incalculable; when one thought how many he must have made in his thirty years of teaching, it was hard to imagine him ever with an unbending back. Yet never had he been called upon to make a bow under such untoward circumstances as this. It was the most difficult achievement of his life.

And the reason he did it was that, though the skies should fall, and his reputation for correctness with them, he could not bring himself to avert this doom by breaking the Little Pink Girl's heart.

Standing stiff and still, without outward show of the turmoil within him, he scanned the faces of the pupils for traces of surprise, consternation, resentment. Surprise he saw, but no sign of the other two emotions. For these were children, and children have only welcome—warm, delighted welcome—for another child!

The fat man at the piano was playing a truly enlivening waltz, and the second-class children were revolving about the room vigorously, hoping for promotion. Never had the myriad electric lights shone so gloriously. Never had the polished floor reflected so.

"Hold out your skirts," whispered the Little Pink Girl, releasing the other's hand, and stepping in front of her. "Like this."

She began to waltz. And at the second beat of the measure, the slender, bare feet of her companion took up the rhythm and followed. For she, too, was at the age that does not know shyness, and for which self-consciousness does not exit.

All the other children stopped. They stood for an instant, and then began to walk after the two, drawn as by magnets.

The teacher of dancing, watching the strange child's performance, grew suddenly alert. He was a lover of his profession, else his enthusiasm would never have lasted so many years. Incidentally, he had made a great deal of money.

"She should be educated," his thoughts ran. "Private lessons from me—and ballet dancing. Give them room," he ordered the pupils in a strong, recovered voice. "Don't crowd like that, children. Don't you know they can't dance if you don't give them room?"

The floor was theirs, the strange child's and her little guide's. No one drew breath. All were watching the two pairs of feet, pointing slenderly; one pair trained, in pink ballet slippers

and pink socks, like two rosebuds, with the dimpled knees bending above them, the pink dress, outspread fanlike, revealing the lace-frilled drawers underneath; the other pair, nude, calloused, but for all that delicately veined and beautiful, with the blood showing through the transparent nails—free feet, unhampered, untrained, yet one with the music, too, knowing of themselves all that the man in the dress suit was at such pains to teach, gifted by nature with a proficiency that no art could ever have brought about.

In the brown-tinted cheeks of the Little Pink Girl the rose-red came and went; her curls, with their luster of brownish gold, swayed to the rhythm of her body; her fair, stern brow belied the witchery of her eyes, eyes that glowed, and widened, and glistened with playing lights, eyes that shone and exulted, because they saw beyond peradventure that *the other little girl danced the best.*

Presently the instrument of silence clicked. Instantly the Little Pink Girl

stopped, and the other little girl stopped because she did. Slowly the teacher of dancing came up and stood before the two friends.

"You're promoted," he said to the Little Pink Girl in his even voice. "Third class. Get your ribbon."

The three mothers, sitting hand in hand on the bench, saw the two approach the platform and the desk.

The godmother took a ribbon out of the drawer, and made as if to pin it on the dress of the Little Pink Girl. The Little Pink Girl shook her head.

"Please, hers first," she said. "She does it so *much* better than me!"

So the godmother, with a smile, got out another ribbon, and decorated with it the dark-haired child's torn frock. At the same moment she took her by the hand. Still holding the waif's hand, she pinned on the badge of the Little Pink Girl, and as she did so she gave her a kiss.

Which was almost as unheard of as the thing that the Little Pink Girl had done.



FLOWERS OF THE DARK

AFTER the last high cloud is ashen cold,
The last bright landmark dwindled strange and far,
They bloom across the dusk in broken gold
Beneath the first faint star.

Some by the river, some upon the height,
One in a little cleft 'twixt hill and hill,—
Luminous, lovely, while the brooding night
Shelters them warm and still.

Homes, blessed homes! here clustered, here apart,
On the gray gloom unfurling, rose by rose;
Each with a crimson hearth-fire at its heart
They tenderly unclose.

Till all the land's a garden fair and still,
And far, a toiling pilgrim, I can mark
One in a little cleft 'twixt hill and hill—
My Flower of the Dark!

NANCY BYRD TURNER.



WHEN you're forty and having hair treatments, Dorr, you'll think differently," Hugh Kennedy, of the civil service, spoke excitedly. "If your son wins a two-penny composition prize, or is cheered at football, you'll be absolutely past speaking to—you won't say it is merely a series of incidents leading to a certain result."

First Lieutenant Dorr Barrows stretched himself leisurely in his steamer chair on the comandancia veranda, and turned from his lazy contemplation of the landscape.

"Maybe," he answered contentedly. "Where did you find the pink lotus flowers, Caldwell? They look well in that dull-green bowl."

"Sultan Panglima is becoming sentimental—better taste, too. He used to send up beastly embroidered robes and baskets of sticky sweets, but he's suddenly veered about to clusters of rare flowers and bits of homemade pottery in pastel shades."

"Perhaps it's his friend Trifon." The army surgeon, "Doc" Venner, who was busy with his harness-repair work, looked up mischievously.

Captain Caldwell, senior inspector of the Zamboanga district, raised a reproachful hand to the American flag floating serenely in the breeze.

"You never provided any rules for this emergency," he told it severely.

An irrepressible laugh went the rounds of the veranda, ending with Sammy Hart, the shavetail, fresh from West Point, who never laughed or

frowned unless the majority led the way.

"Let's get back to Dorr," suggested Doc Venner. "I want to hear about there being no bad and no good. That appeals to me—having just helped hang a juramentado in the barrio. What was he? Speak up, Slats. Tell us what you think."

Dorr shifted himself again in the steamer chair, the long, angular limbs that had earned him his nickname refusing to drape themselves gracefully over the footstool. There was a kindly twinkle in his keen gray eyes.

"A man who had made a mistake," he declared gravely. "I say that there is no such thing as sin or virtue in the generally accepted sense. I refuse to hurrah at acts that might as easily have resulted disastrously as otherwise. And as for sin, I believe in mistakes that have evil consequences, but there is no such thing as deliberate sin, since the original intention of everything is good. And by good I mean perfect."

"Thank you," said the army surgeon, with mock gravity. "You're young. What about Trifon—is he good? He's only pirated about for twenty years."

"He's made mistakes according to our ethics—not according to his own. Don't call it sin, Venner. And certain evil consequences have arisen. Superstition is a mistaken idea, not a crime, and the government punishes poor wretches as if it were. That's why I've trained my men above it; that's the one personal victory of which I am proud. No credit to me," he hastened to add, to fend off the avalanche of interrup-

tions. "Only I see that superstition is a mistake, and I have corrected it in my men. I have seen that disloyalty and treachery are mistaken viewpoints, and I have worked until I have proven to the men that this is so."

"You've pretty well succeeded, too," Caldwell told him with a firm nod of approval. "I'd bank on the regulars, Dorr."

"Thanks." The square jaw relaxed into a momentary smile of content. "And as for Trifon—he's no criminal. He doesn't know any better. What we must do is show him—the same as a child is taught to read. How, in Heaven's name, would you teach the child? Beat it and starve it, and then say: 'Now read me an Emerson essay while I see if you have learned your lesson, you naughty little thing!'"

"Well, how would you have us show Trifon?" urged Kennedy. "I know I'm a pale-faced civilian, but I have a bump of respectful, military curiosity. How would you show him? And how would you manage his best pal, the sultan?"

"Just as they asked. I'll state the case—Caldwell will jerk me up if I make a bull. Panglima, the sultan, is our best friend—he has proven the fact a number of times. Panglima, like all great men, has a family skeleton—and it has begun to rattle; a very modest skeleton, since it is only his great friendship with Trifon, the pirate, which dates back to the old empire days. Trifon is the man who did more to make the Spaniards wish for Spain than any other native of whom the islands can boast. Panglima not only approved of him, but he took Trifon's very substantial aid when he needed it, which is the reason why he is worth a million pesos and has a slave for every moment in the day.

"When Panglima decided to become Americanized, he knew that Trifon would upbraid him bitterly, Trifon being gone on some mysterious cruise through the southern islands. It's the same as when families split because of religious differences. One is this, the other becomes that. They still love each other, but the difference in belief

is a bar. So each tries to convince the other that his way is nicest, after all. And naturally they wish their views to be presented as cleverly as possible—not with an ax."

"Well?" said Caldwell thoughtfully. "What now, Slats?"

"Don't you see? Trifon is—we'll call it grieved because Panglima is Americanized. He can see only ruination for him—no Mecca, no seventh heaven. Panglima is grieved that Trifon is still our enemy. He foresees for Trifon the same ruin painted by Trifon for him. Panglima appeals to us to show Trifon how nice we are; what good ideas and pretty uniforms we have; how we can make music come out of a box, and drill our men and make them salute simultaneously; how we laugh and talk and are kind of heart instead of monster white devils waiting to tear brown men into bits. I call it mighty square of Panglima, don't you? And what do we answer? This: We have our men march at night to kill Panglima's friend. And when we bring that body back as a sign of victory, and Panglima knows of it—those pink lotus flowers will be replaced by red, dripping campianes, with the heads of our men on their blades!"

"Bravo!"

The army surgeon's voice had a ring of genuine admiration; he had stopped his work to listen.

"But it's so absurd," began Kennedy, "to give a formal reception to a criminal—please excuse the word, Dorr, we're not quite convinced as yet—the same honor that would be shown to the Powers visiting us. Suppose Trifon refuses to be convinced? Suppose he, in turn, overpersuades Panglima?"

"Of course, I don't expect to change the orders of the post," Dorr assured him. "I'll march out with my men and fight till I drop. I'm an under officer, but I can't help having an occasional idea——"

"Sometimes it refuses to work, Slats," Kennedy bantered good-naturedly.

But the laugh died out of his voice.

He reached forward to touch the first lieutenant's swinging arm.

"Dorr! Wake up—Dorr!"

Slat's sat in his steamer chair in a limp heap. He had not fainted, there were no symptoms of convulsion or of physical pain; but the square-jawed, longish face, which bespoke at a glance unutterable honesty, self-reliance, and a gentle tolerance toward all men, was the face of a bewildered child waking in the dark, and trying to recall how the room looked in the light. He put his large, capable hands up to his lips to feel their rounded curve; he seemed trying to pick the words from his reluctant mouth.

"Dorr—are you ill?" questioned Caldwell.

He did not answer.

"His pulse is good," said Doc Venner, more to himself than to the others. "Dorr—can't you remember?"

There was a pause of several moments; it seemed to the watching men like hours. Then a shiver passed over Dorr's features, and he shook his head in perplexity.

"Listen, Dorr." Caldwell bent down and spoke in the gentle tone that the little child in the dark would expect. "You are Dorr Barrows, first lieutenant. You are in Zamboango, Mindanao—Camp Liguar."

"What—day—is—it?" The words came with superhuman effort.

"The seventh—the seventh of June. It is five-thirty o'clock."

"Thank God!"

Slat's stood up and stretched characteristically. Color rushed back into his face, and the twinkly, shrewd intelligence that made him fascinatingly ugly returned to the square-jawed features. He looked at the group of astonished men, and a shamed flush replaced the normal color.

"What was it, Dorr?" said Caldwell. "Happen often?"

"That's bad, boy," the army surgeon told him impulsively.

Dorr lifted his eyes to meet the shavetail's stare of pity. He fancied that it was merged with contempt at

such display of weakness. He glanced at Caldwell.

"If I can only find a calendar and know what day of the week it is, I can reason everything back—how old I am, and who and where I am, and what I am doing. But I always have to know the day of the week. Odd, isn't it?"

"Better carry a pocket calendar with the day marked in red ink," advised the army surgeon brusquely. "Don't you have a gragging pain at the back of the head previous to the attack? Don't you have a weak, cold, sickish sensation afterward? It's amnesia, Dorr—the forgetfulness that overtakes people for years at a time, makes them wander about like aimless beggars. It's bad business. You better get out of this climate."

Caldwell had been watching Dorr closely. He saw that the army surgeon could ask dry, diagnostic questions without end, and receive no satisfactory answers, yet he was sure that Dorr knew the cause of the amnesia.

"Better lie down," he mercifully interrupted. "No use staying here talking. Even if you don't feel fagged, you are. Kennedy, please ask Magum about that school celebration, and while you're down in the barrio, the shavetail might go along and see the sultan. I want to stop his knees from wabbling every time Panglima comes by to deliver a personal message. Find out if he is sure Trifon is back—and where he is located. The beggar has been off the coast of China for ever so many moons. Come on, Dorr—right into your room."

Venner watched Caldwell and his charge departing.

"That was nicely managed," he remarked. "Let's mind promptly. Cald'y wants to get to the bottom of Dorr's rugged old heart."

"You think he'll tell? Or will he have it all raveled up in silly theories so it won't be any use?"

"It's what has caused the theories," the army surgeon told them. "The theories and the amnesia all started at once. Clear up whatever started them, and you'll have Dorr free from odd no-

tions, and remembering the day of the week without a pocket calendar."

Inside his own room, Dorr was facing Caldwell with assumed defiance.

"I suppose you want my 'past,'" he said a trifle bitterly. "But I don't choose to tell."

"I don't *want* to hear it," Caldwell assured him. "This being a day-and-night confessional for men's sordid 'mistakes' isn't the sunniest occupation in the world. But I can't let a first lieutenant, a man of responsible position in a dangerous country, be wandering about with tag ends. I wouldn't let you go out to chop wood with a broken arm, Dorr."

"No, I suppose not." Dorr sat down abruptly on the edge of his army cot. "It's only that I resent the telling it even to myself," he explained. "I've put it away, refused to think of it."

"So the theories supplanted it and closed up nasty little cracks that you caught yourself looking through now and then?" Caldwell smiled. "And in order not to blame yourself or any one else, you resolved that there was no sin, merely incidents—an Occidental fatalism in disguise. Oh, Dorr, you're kiddish, aren't you? Tell me what it was—a college quarrel, trying to be a landscape painter, or the best invention in the world that refused to be invented?"

Caldwell's words were bantering, but his face was grave.

"It isn't a trifle—it's what comes once to every man," began Dorr slowly, looking out the window at the snowy tops of the Capoy Mountains. "Maybe theories have their purpose—I never consciously thought of them in that way. If I had kept blaming myself actively—I wouldn't be here talking now. It was love, Caldwell—right love." He paused.

"Who?"

"Narcisa Sofia."

His big hands gripped each other till the knuckles whitened.

Caldwell whistled softly.

"You aimed high. How did you ever have the opportunity?"

"In Manila two years ago. I had just come back from my furlough. She was eighteen, and her parents took her to the opera for the first time. I knew that they were a blue-blooded, patrician Spanish family without enough to eat in the house or warm clothing, but an abundance of plate and rare laces. I kept watching Narcisa at the opera from the moment I took my seat; I don't remember a note of the music. Of course, I can't expect you to enthuse with me——"

"She is the loveliest girl I have ever seen," Caldwell told him reverently; "like a flower garden at sunrise."

"You know her?" Dorr asked, with plaintive eagerness.

"Only slightly, of course. I knew her father, and once I was invited to their home. Narcisa had returned from a convent vacation, and she came into the room for a moment. They were so proud of her!"

Dorr's lips quivered.

"Then you'll understand," he said, with an effort. "There isn't much to tell. Just that I watched her that night, and told myself there could never be any one else to love except Narcisa. Never! That final, almost tragic, feeling that sometimes comes to one. She looked at me several times during the evening, and dropped her eyes, covering her face with her fan. She told me afterward that she, too, had known!"

"Then?"

"Simply this—Narcisa rode out every morning with a manservant—so did I. We met accidentally the first morning—clandestinely all the others. The servant kept a distance behind—Narcisa said he was trustworthy. Little by little, Caldwell, I told Narcisa everything about myself—where I was to be stationed, what I hoped to do, who I was, and how unworthy of her. I told her that I loved her. I know I shouldn't have done it—but I couldn't help myself! She warned me that it would be madness to go to her father—that her family would never receive me, that they had other plans for her. But she told me, too, that she loved me. That was enough to make me stay on

at Manila and brave those foolhardy meetings.

"Of course we were discovered—the thing was impossible from all angles, I suppose. One morning Narcisa's father rode out to take her back. Caldwell, if I live to be a thousand, I shall still see her white, quivering face, her outstretched hands, as he took hold of her horse's bridle and turned her away from me! Every time I live it over I lash myself with blame that I didn't snatch her onto my saddle and try to outpace him. Oh, that is as maudlin as a yellow-backed novel—but I think it, anyway!

"I loved her, and she had said that she loved me—and because of a miserable family pride and moth-eaten ancestry they took her away—and I never knew what happened to her! That's it, don't you see? I never knew what they did to her! Sometimes she had half whispered to me of the convent. Good God, Cald, I've seen her taking her vows, I've seen her in her habit, so somber and heavy for her slim little figure, I've seen her eyes, blurred with tears, looking at me in dumb appeal—I've listened to that last cry: 'Dorr, Dorr!'—"

"The next day I received a curt note from her father telling me to leave Manila at once, and that no communication from me would be even read. The Powers were decent, and sent me down here a little sooner than I had expected."

"Was that all?"

Dorr's head drooped.

"No. The morning I left Manila, I met Narcisa with her duenna in the street—I've always fancied that she was waiting for me purposely. She asked me to listen to what she had to say, and not to answer her. Every bit of tenderness had left her face, and she stood before me like a marble image with the power of speech. All she said was: 'I hate you. I never could have really loved you—it was just a pastime—only I was stupid, and did not choose some one of my own standing. Adios, señor.'

"I couldn't have answered her, Cald-

well, if I had wanted to. She walked away, with her duenna trudging behind, as erect as any prize shavetail from the Point. And I stood there—don't know how long, or when it was that I began walking. But after three hours and a half, as nearly as I can figure, I found myself staring at a large calendar in the clubhouse. I began figuring everything back from that—that figure on the calendar seemed to be the only thing that I could be sure of. I suppose I had shuffled along the street somehow, and had reached the club by blind instinct. It was deserted in the foyer, and I must have slipped into a large chair and waited until this thing passed away, and I happened to see the calendar.

"Ever since then I've had these times—but always before when I've been alone or just going to sleep. I can't tell when they're coming or how long they'll last, and I'm as helpless as a baby. You see, I thought so surely that Narcisa cared, and—"

Caldwell mentally reviewed the cruel pride of the Sofia family, realizing the uselessness of any farther appeal to them, and the probability that Narcisa had been made to take orders as a life penance. There was very little that he could say.

"I suppose I'll go on having them as long as I live," Dorr went on. "I had the theories that I've been expounding directly afterward. They seemed so kindly and firm and ironclad, clamping every soft, emotional thing tightly and not giving one a chance to fester inwardly from wondering about ifs and buts—the way orthodox, cut-and-dried, right-and-wrong doctrines do."

"Dorr, suppose you go away and see if you can't lose the theories?"

He shook his head.

"It will always be the same—just Narcisa—no matter where I go—always hearing her call me, then hearing her tell me that she had never cared. I don't believe that, Cald, d'y'e understand? I don't believe a syllable of it."

And Slats bent his head forward on his thin, high knees, and sobbed like a child.

Four days later, coming back from an official visit to the sultan in the early morning, Caldwell and the army surgeon and Kennedy drew their ponies into a walk as they began picking their way up the steep comandancia trail.

The sultan had been pathetically good-natured in regard to Trifon, had implored the Americanos to be gentle in their treatment, to seek out Trifon and show him the beauties of citizenship. He had been sure that it would not be necessary to attack his old friend, to run him down like an opium smuggler or a head hunter. It needed diplomacy, although the sultan had not used that exact word. He had appealed to his wife, fat and forty-five, placidly chewing betelnut and smiling good-naturedly. The royal wife had nodded in agreement, adding that Trifon was kind of heart and generous of impulse if properly approached.

Caldwell had found himself choking back a hysterical desire to laugh.

"We will take the matter up at length," he had promised. "We, too, are not for war. But to seek out Trifon and offer him refreshments—is that not strange?"

The sultan had shrugged his body nonchalantly.

"To offer him bullets would mean that he must return the honor," had been his answer.

Coming up the trail, Kennedy looked toward the comandancia, and jerked at his reins.

"Caldy, I'm seeing wrong—or is it—no—it—"

Caldwell gave a swift glance. Then he lashed his pony ahead.

The two large flags—one on the flag-pole, one floating from the cuartel—had been reversed, and hung with the stars downward, signal of distress.

At the top of the trail, the shavetail came running to meet them, his face white and shiny looking, his arms waving in an uncontrolled, womanish fashion.

"Mutiny, mutiny, mutiny!" he screamed, as the men dismounted.

Then he fell up against Venner's

horse, and began shaking as if he were cold.

"What do you mean?" Caldwell's voice was harsh rasping. "Speak out quick or I'll—"

He raised his hand threateningly.

"I went to the Chino shop to bring the supplies. Dorr was drilling the men when I left. As I turned into the trail coming back, I saw the flags with the distress signal. When I got here, Dorr was pacing up and down the veranda, wringing his hands and trying to tell me something." The shavetail took a fresh breath, and tried to make himself speak coherently: "I went to the cuartel to see for myself. Every man was gone, every damned brown face deserted, every pony gone with them—and we can't get 'em back—Dorr says we can't get 'em back!"

The boy's voice rose to a high, wild scream.

"The men Dorr said were above disloyalty or superstition," said Caldwell slowly. "Good God, Venner, I've got it! It was Dorr's fault!"

"You mean an attack of not remembering?"

"Of course! Don't you see? In the middle of the drill, Dorr suddenly forgot everything, and, there being no calendar on the walls, he couldn't figure back without being noticed. He must have done something during that time. He must have made them afraid—you know the thousand and one things a native's superstition-ridden mind will grasp at—and they fled, hauling the flags upside down as a sign of defiance. It was Dorr's telling me about—"

Caldwell caught himself in time.

"Where is Dorr?" asked Kennedy, of the trembling shavetail.

But Dorr answered for himself. He was coming toward them like the wind, his long limbs scarcely seeming to touch the ground.

"I finished the drill," he said monotonously, before the others had a chance to speak. "I remember finishing the drill, but I couldn't give the signal for dismissal—they were all lined up, waiting, and then—the next thing I remember was looking at the

empty place. I dimly knew that three days ago some one told me it was the seventh of June. I figured that to-day must be the tenth—it took a long time—but it all came back. Every man has gone, Caldý, and every pony. Two hundred men—and the other companies at Heithley, a hundred miles away!"

"What did you do?" Caldwell asked. "You must remember what you did, Dorr. Try to realize what this may mean."

Slats' gray eyes closed hopelessly. "I can't remember," he said dully, after a moment's pause. "Only that I finished the drill. Caldý, I didn't do anything that I can remember—"

"Seeing him in an apparent trance was enough," cut in Kennedy. "Infested with evil spirits would be a natural verdict. What are we all standing in a huddle for, like women talking over a back gate? It's to find out what Dorr Barrows did, and to find those men and get them back."

"It wasn't superstition," the first lieutenant denied. "I'd swear I've taught them better than that—I'd have staked my life on them. I've trained them in loyalty, too."

"Maybe they decided that it was a 'mistake.'"

The army surgeon's tone stung like a lash.

Dorr was silent. He gritted his teeth, and began walking up to the comandancia behind the others' horses.

The dead silence of the cuartel was worse than the clash of creeses or the sharp report of rifles.

Caldwell gave a half laugh, half cry of despair.

"We can't very well show Trifon the brilliant command of Americanos over educated natives, can we?"

No one answered. Each man was occupied in facing the situation—the fact that Panglima must soon learn of the affair; the grave uncertainty as to whether or not Trifon or Panglima had not planned the mutiny, or, whether, indeed, the men had been waiting for just such an opportunity to revolt; the knowledge that before Camp Heithley could send help there might be no need

of sending it; the disgrace of having to report mutiny—the blackest, most deadly of all offenses—to the Powers. And Slats could not remember what he had done!

When they reached the comandancia, Caldwell ordered Kennedy and the shavetail to stay there.

"Even if it's as useless as Dorr's trying to remember, we must go out and try to get a clew. We can't sit in rocking-chairs on the veranda and wish for the troops' return. First, haul those flags right side up, Hart. Kennedy, don't wire Heithley until we come back. And if we're not back inside of ten hours—wire them and start a searching party."

"Where are we going?" asked Vener calmly.

"I don't just know. We'll ride down that trail and strike through the cogon grass toward the cordillera. We'll take knapsacks with the reserve supply of beef extract and chocolate. Three of us to find a company of two hundred deserters! But we can't stay here—"

"It's the first time since you took the post, isn't it, Caldý?" Dorr asked humbly. "You've weathered everything else, but you always kept your men with you! And it's my fault!"

His face crumpled as if in sudden pain.

"We'll go toward the cordillera," Caldwell continued, as if he had not heard. "And look for signs of freshly broken grass. They'll take the unused roads, for sure. That's all we can do. Don't let the barrio know—yet. And every step of the way, Dorr Barrows, *try to remember what you did!*"

The shavetail and the civil-service man watched the three fleet ponies start back down the steep trail, Caldwell in the lead, Dorr next, and the army surgeon at the end. Three desperate white men riding out to find two hundred brown soldiers with some frantic notion in their flat, stupid heads—and all because Narcisca Sofia had told Dorr that she had never really cared!

Out in the valley the three men paused, looking up at the steep, dan-

gerous cordillera, and the wide trails leading up to it on either side.

"We better all take the same path," Venner said, reading the unspoken question. "Right or left, Caldwell?"

"Right—it's the least used. They'd be more likely to be in hiding there, unless the sultan's got 'em tucked away till night."

Dorr did not speak; he lashed his horse forward, as if eager to be the first to mount the road. Logs lay across it, and brilliant purple and green flowers blossomed in odd shapes at either side. Long stretches of slimy green swampland warned them to look sharp to their horses' footing. Now and then the head of a monster gray lizard peeped out at them, or a rustle in the thick underbrush told of some modest snake hurrying away from their approach. It was nearing noon, and the sun poured through the thick lattice-work of treetops. The birds had stopped singing, and only the harsh caw-caw of some vulture and the nervous, noisy scolding of the apes broke the stillness.

Nearing the top, Caldwell suddenly dismounted.

"Look here," he said softly. "Some one has pushed back these bejuco vines."

"This road leads to the coast," the army surgeon decided, after raising his field glasses. "It's the long way from the town—remember how it winds around unexpectedly? The sultan told us about it. Odd we never struck it before."

"No," Caldwell answered, pushing the vines aside. "Because our friend Trifon used to play along this way for victims."

The men followed him through the opening. Something white had gleamed from behind the vines in spite of their heavy foliage.

"A deserted shrine," said Dorr softly.

"Don't start remembering that," Caldwell told him brutally. "See—zealous pilgrims gave the best that they had in the old empire days. An ideal place for it—partially hidden so that the head hunters wouldn't destroy it,

and, like all forbidden things, still enduring in spite of persecution."

Around the crude stone figure of the Virgin Mary were strewn the white, blanched bones of animals, dried, crumbling wreaths of flowers, and the moldy wings of birds—offerings from the Spanish Catholics. A cross of rotting wood rose beside the statue. Soft, heavy mosses covered it tenderly.

The men took off their hats. Something about the figure and the cross, and the offerings lying on the ground, took away the sting and anger of the chase.

"It meant a great deal to them," said Venner, as he turned away. "I wonder why the vines were so pushed back—a recent devotee?"

But Dorr gave a loud cry. He had picked up something from the ground—the cover of a red leather prayer book with the name "Narcisca Sofia" on it in gold letters.

"I've forgotten," he began piteously, holding it out to Caldwell. "Tell me the day of the week—somebody! Oh, I can't stand this again! I—"

The look in Caldwell's face steadied him.

"The leaves are torn out," Caldwell was telling Venner. "We must try to find the leaves. She must have dropped them as a guide. She must have been praying here, and been attacked, or— You see, the road leads to the coast, where the ships land, and she might have taken the wrong way."

"No, no, no!" protested Dorr. "She's in Manila, in a convent! How could she be here? She never really cared—she—"

The three men stared blankly at the tiny leather cover with those telltale letters across it, then at the gentle figure in the shrine, and then at one another's tense faces.

"To hell with the troops!" said Dorr suddenly. "It's the woman who used this prayer book that comes first now!"

"When you think what may have happened to her—" began Venner.

"I won't think till I find her," Caldwell cut in, swinging into his saddle. "Here, Dorr, we are right; she's left the

leaves along the way the best she could. Get down and walk and look for 'em. What's that over there? An evening prayer. Venner's found another— Ah, the flyleaf with her name again and the date of her confirmation—"

Dorr half walked, half crawled along the roadside.

"Here's one, Caldý. Of course, she isn't here—but maybe she sent me a message—maybe she gave some one this prayer book to bring to me. Oh, I know she must have cared a little! Here's one, Caldý. The road breaks. What is down there—d'ye dare to think? This is the morning prayer—Narcisa!" He paused in reverie, then went on tenderly: "We'll follow. It's a certainty that she must have been taken at the shrine. Here's one, fluttering on the tree branch. Caldý, we'll find her, won't we? Of course she isn't here, but we'll find whoever—"

Pages, rudely torn and scattered, pointed the way. The army surgeon's bronzed hands offered up reverently to Caldwell little pieces of paper covered with fine print. Now this side and now that, and the troops were forgotten as they gathered the clues one by one, still breathless from the shock. Whom would they find at the end of the road—or would the pages give out before the end was reached?

It was rocky, gray country now, the dust betraying the ugly heart of the cordillera. Caldwell suspected that the road would suddenly dip into a steep precipice, so they dismounted and tied their tired beasts to trees. A little later they were obliged to stoop under tangles of brush; and then, a few feet ahead, jagged rocks warned them that they could go no farther. They crawled on their stomachs to the edge of the chasm.

Peering down cautiously over the natural fortress of rock, they looked down into a ravine that was like a round chopping bowl, filled with delightful green shrubbery, sunken into the rough, barren stone, an unexplainable oasis in the cordillera. At first,

Caldwell wondered whether it was not a mirage caused by the sun.

"No, no, no!" panted Dorr softly, as if to deny the sight to his own eyes.

The army surgeon and Caldwell were silent, staring at the scene below.

In the "chopping bowl" were seated, in a long file, twenty-odd natives fantastically dressed in the skins of animals, with brilliant bird feathers in their coarse black hair. Campilanes lay in waiting across their laps, although their thoughts seemed far otherwise employed. At the head of the file was an old, ugly, grizzled man with thick, drooping lips and greenish eyes, a huge ear plug of bamboo in the lobe of his ear and a nose ring of heavy silver adding to the gruesomeness of his appearance. Horrible scars covered his arms and legs, and around his body was wrapped a sarong made of carabao hide, and painted with barbaric symbols. This was Trifon, the pirate, the friend of Sultan Panglima, the Moro warrior who was to be converted through brotherly love and pink punch!

But facing Trifon, about three feet away from him, stood a girl, slender, almost boyish in figure, dressed in a long, black riding habit, and a small, round hat. She had dark hair that curled naturally about her oval face, and large, frank blue eyes with a clear, straightforward expression in them. Only her sensitive, pink mouth betrayed the charming woman soon to be. Beside her lay several odd Spanish bags of old leather, guarded by a crouching, crying duenna. There was something short and black in the girl's hand, which she was holding upright in the pirate's face. She was smiling at him defiantly.

"Narcisa!" gasped Dorr. "Narcisa!"

The suspense seemed to make the air sing with strange sounds. To rush down unarmed would be folly, practically suicide for themselves and murder for Narcisa. Once the pirate wriggled up closer to gaze at what the girl held in her hand—it seemed to hypnotize him. The woman guarding the bags sobbed aloud, and the natives watched their leader in subdued obedience.

From the opposite side of the ravine

came the sharp clop clop of horses' hoofs. The road to which the post had been accustomed ended there.

"The troops—the troops, Caldyl!" Dorr's voice whispered.

Caldwell did not seem to hear him; he was still staring down into the oasis. The army surgeon buried his head in his arms, and Dorr saw that his shoulders were shaking.

A thin, yellow face, a Spanish face, appeared over the rocks on the other side. Then it disappeared, and the tip of a hand could be seen beckoning. Narcisa did not waver in her gaze, nor did her small hand drop the magic article. Trifon made some remark, to which she threw back her head in dignified acknowledgment.

Then came a row of flat, brown faces, lining the rock ledge.

Dorr jumped to his feet. The sight of his men maddened him.

"Stop!" he shouted, pointing his hand at the group below. "The first gu-gu who moves gets the rope, the rope, the rope!"

And every brown hand reached itself up to a flat, stupid forehead in a salute.

Trifon had scrambled to his feet. Narcisa, glancing up, held out her hands in uncontrollable joy.

"Señor Barrows—Señor Dorr Barrows! Oh, we are all together!" she cried, her clear tones reaching the men above. "Wait—we'll come up—we'll come right up. Trifon will bring me. Thank you ever so much for your men, but I don't need them now!"

They watched Trifon lead Narcisa, her duenna following with the bags in tow, through what was apparently a crevice in the rock.

"On your feet!" screamed Dorr suddenly to his men, expecting a volley of bullets. "I'm coming."

But every figure jumped up and stood erect, obediently waiting.

Venner and Caldwell were still silent. They followed the younger man out of the maze obediently, running, pushing, shoving their way around the circle of entangling foliage. They came upon the Spaniard halfway around the circle. Even then Dorr would not have

stopped, in his frantic desire to reach his men, but the man called to them appealingly.

"Señores—what has happened? Señores, we come from the boat to reach your comandancia. Some one told us the long way, some one bad of heart. We travel since daybreak, the señorita singing to herself so." He shrugged his shoulders in helpless disgust at Narcisa's carefree spirits. "She saw the shrine back there at the roadside, and dismounted to pray. As we were kneeling, señores, the devil native came and held her arms and threatened to kill unless she give him many pesos. Money! Señores, we are stylish beggars—understand?" and he smiled momentarily. "The señorita called to me to ride like wind to find the army post and tell what happened—and somehow the Blessed Mother helped me get away. I am a brave man, do you not think so? I leave Manila against the Señor Sofia's will, and come down here to guard the señorita. I ride here, there, everywhere. By and by I strike a good road—I see a flag waving in the distance—I love that flag for the first time—I ride into the gateway—I dismount—I come into the cuartel, and there, señores—" "And there?" cried the three men simultaneously.

"There I see this señor officer asleep—yet awake—leaning against the wall. He did not answer, he did not move, he kept staring ahead at nothing. Devils in his body, I am afraid. The soldiers stand straight and stiff, like those in toy shops. I call to the señor, I pray to him that a señorita—the señorita he used to love in Manila—is in distress. I beg him to come. He only shut his eyes stupidly like a wax doll! Bah! I turn to the men and tell them, pray to them. I ask them why their officer is so dead alive. They do not know. I beg them to come with me. I tell them it is their duty. They mind me!" He drew himself up proudly. "Every man from the cuartel comes with me. They saddle their ponies and turn the flags upside down to tell the señor officer, when the devils leave him, that they have gone to aid some one in distress.

There was no one else about the place, señores—you understand? And they could not write—nor I." The last was mumbled, "They come with me—every man as brave and true as a Spaniard! Señores, you have nothing to fear from your men. Even if the señor officer falls asleep, they will do their duty."

Dorr gave an inarticulate exclamation. He pushed past the Spaniard, leaving Caldwell and Venner to say the proper thing. He reached his men—his regulars, standing in a circle about the rock, waiting for his next command. He met each of their faces, and every eye acknowledged his unspoken plea for pardon and answered back forgiveness. And these were the men whom Caldwell and Venner and Kennedy and Hart had said had deserted because of superstition or disloyalty!

"Señor Barrows"—Narcisa was standing not six feet away, the blue eyes dark with happiness, the pink-bow mouth curved into a wistful smile—"Trifon wants to be an American. We came up a winding stone stairway that you'd never find. You go in on that rough side through a long cave, but you come out on the level part—where your men are. May he not be forgiven for stealing me? Señor Barrows, it is the last time that he will ever steal. And even if he was very fierce in speech, he did me no harm. You found the prayer-book leaves?"

Caldwell and Venner, who, with the Spaniard, had been listening in the background, came forward. Trifon looked up through shaggy eyebrows to meet Caldwell's smile.

"Wait here, Trifon, until we take the señorita to the post to rest. Venner, take command—welcome Trifon to our post." Even the tenseness of the moment could not quite overcome his sense of the humor of making the army surgeon a military authority momentarily. "Barrows, I'll ride with you to the top of the hill, then you can take the Señorita Sofia on to the post with her servants. Until then, Trifon."

And Caldwell saluted gravely.

Dorr helped Narcisa mount her pony. The duenna, still weeping, packed the

bags on her own mule, and followed submissively. Caldwell and the manservant followed in the rear. The waiting regulars and Doc Venner, frightened out of a year's growth, and a very childish ex-highwayman, watched them disappear.

Narcisa turned boldly in her saddle to wave a friendly hand at Trifon. Dorr tried to grasp the hand, but she drew back with a sudden shyness.

Caldwell considerably dropped his horse a few paces behind.

"Darling, they're not listening. Tell me," begged Dorr.

"I came to tell you that I loved you," said Narcisa slowly, and with the childish frankness that was characteristic of her. "Señor, you never knew the reason of our unhappiness in Manila? Ah, I was a bad sister. You, who were never permitted to know my family, could not have dreamed the truth. Two older sisters—and neither beautiful—must be married before I. It is horrible to have it otherwise. I, Narcisa Sofia, had taken a solemn vow that I would not love or be loved until both were betrothed. And then—I rode out with you each morning and let you say to me— You see how bad I was? And afterward, when I waited for you in the street with my duenna, I did not mean what I said to you—I made myself say those words to punish me for what I had done! You Americans do not understand such things easily—but it was a very false, bad thing for me to have done. Dorr"—she swayed toward him in her saddle—"both have married oldish señores—funny, slow men who cannot ride horseback or eat sweets. But they are happy. And—I—am—released—"

"And you came here—you dared coming alone to Mindanao—a girl—a little, little girl, to tell—"

Dorr dropped his reins, he forgot the people behind them.

"I came, señor. I was praying at the shrine that you would still care. Oh, I was sure you would! Men with faces like yours, so ugly and yet so beautiful, always keep on caring! That was why

I took my own money and my servants, and dared to come. I did not listen to my parents! And if you had not cared—I would never have gone back; I would have stayed to teach little children how to read and write. But you do—you do——”

Her voice had elements of adventurous boyhood, of a girl's lovely modesty and a woman's tender, true devotion.

“Narcisa, I can't answer you here. But the padre can come inside of twelve hours. And then I won't let you ever go back.”

When they reached the little shrine, Narcisa paused.

“I would like——” she began, looking at Caldwell.

“I have come this far, Señorita Sofia, only to tell you of my admiration and gratitude.” Caldwell's bow was positively courtly; one would have fancied that he had led the cotillions during the past season. “And to ask you to explain Trifon's sudden allegiance. From kidnaping for ransom to asking our truce is a far cry. And you are a rather tiny girl for such an undertaking.”

“So easy!” Narcisa explained, smiling archly. “So nice that Trifon spoke Spanish! If he had not spoken Spanish, I could not have managed it—but he did, being very wicked.” She laughed at her own admission. “All the time I was throwing the prayer-book leaves on the ground, I kept telling him that he would be sorry he was taking me away, that I had the power of Allah. We came down into his sunken garden, and he started to tie my hands and feet. Then he asked me what power I might have. Nice of him to give me an opportunity of showing off! I told him that I would show him what his place in seventh heaven would be should he become an Americano. Also what would be his inevitable destruction should he refuse the allegiance. See!”

She held up a souvenir fountain pen with two small, square openings in the side.

Looking through them, Caldwell saw a miniature picture of the capitol at Washington, with the American flag

waving above it. Turning to the second peek hole, he squinted in silent merriment at what the initiated dub Niagara Falls, but what to Trifon's ignorant eyes must have seemed positive proof of Allah's wrath!

“See,” said Narcisa calmly, handing the pen over to Dorr for inspection; “I used it on my trip. It came from a souvenir stand in Manila. It would have been a shame to have had guns fired and people hurt and disagreeable things like that—all because I was coming to find Señor Barrows. I wasn't afraid of Trifon—that is, very much. I kept all those men in a file in front of me. It was the first time in my life I ever made people get down on their knees in a file. Oh, I know that I should have been a boy, and worn brass buttons!”

Her slim figure vanished through the opening of the bejucu vines. Caldwell drew Dorr aside. The servants, too, had gone to make their thanksgiving offering.

“I have a strong suspicion, Dorr, that you're cured of those—times. You'll marry Narcisa and grow fat and placid, resign, and become a prosperous merchant. And, Dorr, I'm sorry.”

“Because of the cure?” Dorr was light-headed with joy.

“Because of my insisting that you were an unconscious traitor. Slats, you've made the biggest test of any man in Mindanao.”

“Couldn't very well help it,” Dorr said, with an odd twinkle. “So, after all, it was neither a virtue nor a sin. I won't be praised any more than I will be blamed.”

“So?” Caldwell paused a moment. “What do you think of Trifon's seizure of Narcisa, and her tricking him with the fountain pen?”

“It was hellish—unforgivable—he ought to be shot! But wasn't she wonderful, heroic——” began Dorr breathlessly, his face lighting with tenderness as he looked toward the little shrine.

Caldwell pushed him away playfully. “Saved!” he pronounced. “You don't have to wait for those hair treatments at forty.”



THE WOMAN WITH A PAST

BY ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

XIII.—A CASE OF BLACKMAIL

Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousst efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.—*Pappa Passes.*

PIPPA CARPENTER despised the morning paper. She could not have held it in more bitter scorn if she had once been a reporter. Like everybody else in the world, she always took a daily newspaper, but days went by without her having opened it. Evening after evening her maid removed a neatly folded square of black and white and threw it in the ash bin. Pippa paid for the papers, and occasionally looked up in them the hour for the rising of the curtain at some theater; there ended her interest in such sordid commodities.

This is not entirely irrelevant, for it presents a pretty psychological question as to why Mrs. Carpenter did actually open her newspaper that particular morning, and, skimming over Balkan difficulties, suffragette outrages, and the newest criminal trial, swooped with a deadly certainty upon the "society page."

She had been vouchsafed no prophetic dream, nor yet a foreboding; she had no interest in society, and still less in the silly page that purported to record its doings; yet there she sat, bolt upright in bed, her coffee untasted on the table

beside her, reading rather crossly through a variety of useless items that did not appeal to her in the least.

"Papers should be suppressed!" she murmured fretfully. "Don't shut the windows, Lucille; it's muggy to-day. And society reporters should be suppressed. And society should be— Good heavens!"

She sat bolt upright a moment longer, transfixed by what she had just seen; then suddenly she crumpled back in a tired, rather childlike, little heap. Pippa looked ridiculously young in bed. She was very pale, and her purple-gray eyes were as wide as if she had seen a ghost.

"I don't believe I want any coffee this morning, Lucille," she said faintly, from the depths of white pillows and streaming red hair.

After Lucille had taken the little tray away, she propped herself on her elbow, and took up the paper again:

The prettiest debutante of the season has already joined the list of the prospective spring brides. Miss Rosamond Eagan, daughter of John Eagan, the railroad magnate, has formally corroborated the report that she is to marry the well-known stock-broker and popular clubman, Mr. Howard Lane Burroughs. Miss Eagan—

The paper dropped once more from Philippa's hand, and she sank back upon the pillow. For a long, a very long, time she lay there, staring at the ceiling, trying to think, trying to see clearly, trying to decide justly. The noise from the street below did not reach her ears. She hardly noticed the telephone ringing in the next room until Lucille answered it, and came in with a trivial message about a luncheon.

"Yes, I'll be there, of course— No; I can't come to-day!" Pippa pressed her hands against her temples and collected her thoughts rapidly. "Tell her I'm very sorry, but I have—I have a bad headache. And, Lucille, when you have rung off, please switch the telephone in here, and then don't disturb me till I ring."

After a few minutes, she got out of bed slowly, almost painfully, as if all the nerves of her body were bruised, and went across the room to her desk. From a locked box she took a bundle of papers, and went back to bed. The telephone transmitter stood on the table beside her, and now it jangled shrilly; but she frowned and let it ring. It hardly penetrated her consciousness, so absorbed was she in the bundle of papers, though at any other time the continued ringing would have driven her wild with nervousness.

Her heavy hair, hanging over her shoulders, was in her way, and she looped and knotted it back with impatient fingers. Crowned with that disheveled, burnished mass, she had never looked so beautiful in her life. Faint shadows had been suddenly painted beneath her eyes; her red mouth was set in a curve most sorrowful, but strangely firm.

Half an hour later she tied the papers up again, sat thinking for a moment longer, and reached slowly for the transmitter. No need to look up this number! No need even to search her memory for it, though it was fifteen years and more since she had called it.

Very clearly and quietly she spoke:

"Please give me Cortlandt nine, six, three, two, five."

And then:

"I wish to speak to Mr. Burroughs— immediately, yes. Simply say a lady. Oh, I see! Very well, if those are your instructions, you may tell him that it is—his wife."

When, in twenty minutes' time, Lucille hastily answered an imperative ring, she was almost startled by the change in her mistress. All the languor, all the weariness, all the outward and visible signs of headache had vanished. Mrs. Carpenter, as if she were too restless to wait even for a moment, had already turned on her bath, and was at her wardrobe door, looking over frocks.

"Hurry, Lucille! Is the morning room in order? Flowers? I didn't ask who has sent them, and I don't care; but I want flowers in the room somewhere. Orchids—that will do. And the gray frock with the Persian embroidery. Watch the clock for me; I am expecting some one at twelve."

At twelve to the dot Howard Burroughs was shown into the little morning room—the room that an enthusiast had declared to be the most perfect feminine setting in New York. It gave him an odd and instant sense of hush, though the street sounds were no more conspicuously absent here than in other houses. The quiet half light that yet gave no effect of dimness, the soft tones of gray and mauve and silver, the fire lazily burning on the hearth, the inscrutable Mona Lisa above the mantel, the heavy, exotic orchids lavishly massed in one corner of the room—all these things seemed to combine to muffle external, jarring things, and to create an atmosphere almost of suspended breath.

Burroughs was a big, handsome man, who did not at first glance look his fifty-odd years. It was only in his eyes that he carried the betrayal; they were world-weary, and not quite direct in their gaze. His fresh color and muscular body remained vigorous and suggestive of something rather better than the prime of life; but his eyes were old.

As usual, he was admirably dressed, in loose-fitting, English clothes; a hasty bracer had dissipated a slightly jaded

air that he feared might have lingered from last night; and his strong and well-shaped chin had just the arrogant, conquering-hero tilt that experience had taught him was likely to go well with even the best of women. Some one had once said of Howard Burroughs that, while no one could ever be quite sure of him, it didn't really matter since he was so sure of himself.

Nevertheless, in spite of all his sublime self-confidence and male complacency, he did have a qualm or two of something that he called "nerves," as he waited for the woman who had once borne his name. He walked restlessly from the fireplace to the window and back again, picked up a slim book from the table—it was poetry, and he dropped it hastily with a grimace—and slapped his gloves against his hand as if to whip himself into another frame of mind.

And then the curtains parted, and Philippa, pale, but entirely composed and calm, and looking like a lovely and rather *mondaine* nun in her gray Parisian gown, came into the room.

She held out her hand quite simply and naturally, and said, in the voice that he remembered as well as he remembered that of his mother:

"Well, Howard, it's been a long time, hasn't it?"

For a moment he stood speechless, merely holding her hand hard and staring at her.

"You—you are very much changed," was all his worldliness could find to say at last.

"Naturally—in fifteen years!" She smiled quietly. "I don't think that you are changed at all, Howard. Aren't you going to sit down?"

When they were both seated, he still stared at her.

"Well?" she smiled questioningly.

"I didn't mean changed in that way," he said. "You are a hundred times more—beautiful."

Pippa's laugh was soft and without bitterness.

"What a pity you never said things like that to me when we were—married!" she said, with gentle mockery.

"Didn't I?"

She shook her head, still smiling.

"Not——"

He finished for her, as she paused:

"Not after the first! What a brute I was! Oh, God, Phil, what a brute and what a fool!"

He was not looking at her now, but past her, as if he saw tragic and evil shapes of the past crowding up.

"Let the ghosts rest, Howard," Pippa said gently, but her eyes were full of a pity that she had not expected to feel for him. "We had our youth, and our chance, and we lost it between us. It wasn't *that* I sent to speak to you about."

But the man did not seem to hear her.

"I didn't know it would make me feel like this to see you again," he said huskily. "I didn't know!"

Impulsively she put out her hand to him, and he caught it and pressed it violently against his lips.

"Phil—Phil!" he muttered. "There never was any woman that could touch you! If I thought I'd have a chance with you now, I'd chuck everything! Phil!"

Though she tried to draw her hand away, he held it fast, and pressed it against his eyes.

"To have to wait fifteen years to wake up!" he almost groaned. "And then to make a howling fool of myself! Phil, how you must despise me!"

The heart of a certain type of woman is a strange thing. It is built and shaped to be used exclusively as a shrine, and when the one god has been broken or stolen from the altar, the woman will dig up all the other fractured and defaced gods and ikons of her youth and weep over them, recalling in what gracious fashion this one took to incense and marigolds, and how beautiful that one was before the testing fires scorched him. This is beside the point, except to explain why it was that the little name, "Phil," not heard for over fifteen years, should have brought back to Pippa a vision of a bay at night, a stalled motor boat floating softly in the wake of the moon, and a voice whispering: "Phil—please! Phil!"

There was just a second filled with that aching sense of a dead joy.

Then the impression passed, and Pippa was entirely practical again. She drew her hand resolutely away, and said, in a matter-of-fact tone:

"I hear you are engaged, Howard?"

The man started as if she had flicked him with a whip. A slow and dusky flush crawled up from his collar to his hair.

"I—I—yes!" he stammered baldly.

"A young girl, I believe?"

Pippa was not looking at him. She sat on a low fauteuil, leaning forward to play with a great pinkish orchid that drooped from a bowl on the low table before her. As he did not answer, she went on, in even tones:

"A young, charming girl, unusually pretty. Her first season, isn't it?"

"Yes."

Pippa dropped the orchid and faced him.

"Why?" she asked.

He was disconcerted.

"Why? I don't believe I understand what you mean—"

"Oh, yes, you do! Why are you marrying this exquisite young creature? Her picture, even in that wretched paper, nearly made me cry, it looked so innocent and so gay! You're not in love with her. I don't believe she's in love with you."

He started quickly to speak, but stopped.

"Go on," he said rather grimly.

"I'm merely trying to see what the girl is going to get out of it," said Philippa. "Of course, I see what you're going to get. John Eagan would be the most useful kind of a father-in-law. With this uncertainty in railroad stocks just now, the inside track would of course be—"

Burroughs started up savagely.

"Damn it, Phil, you go too far!" he cried. "It's true; it is a good match for both sides. John Eagan and I can help each other financially; I admit it. But if that were all, I'd see him in—*in* Hades before I'd marry his daughter!"

"Well, then," said Pippa, unimpressed by this outburst. "what is it?

Love? She's about eighteen, I suppose?"

"Twenty," he corrected her. "Her *début* was postponed two years because her people were in mourning. Phil"—he hesitated, walked across to the window, and came quickly back—"Phil, you're such a good fellow that I'm going to say something to you that may make me sound like the worst cad and bounder you've ever known."

"I don't believe that, Howard," she returned, looking up at him frankly. "You have been, and doubtless still are, a number of bad things, but I never knew you to be either a cad or a bounder."

"Thanks!" His flush deepened in surprised gratitude. "It's this way: Rosamond cares for me."

"She would get over that," said Pippa calmly. "Twenty can get over anything."

"Doubtless. There is just this to add: The alternative that her mother is holding over her head is—*Ranway*."

Philippa started. Lord Ranway's reputation was notorious on two continents, and its unsavory nature had kept most decent men far afield from him.

"But—but he is a monster!" she exclaimed, in horror.

"I believe you! Just the same, if Rosamond doesn't marry me, Mrs. Eagan will see to it that Ranway gets her. She—the old woman—prefers him, as it is, because he has a title, but Eagan is on his daughter's side, and we've succeeded in getting the engagement announced at last. You see, for the moment—strange as it may appear to you"—he smiled somewhat bitterly—"Rosamond regards me in the light of a deliverer—Perseus rescuing her from the dragon!"

Philippa was silent for a space. At last she drew a deep breath, as if she had made up her mind.

"Of course you must marry her," she said. "I had meant to prevent you"—her assurance was really rather amazing, he thought—"but I see that you must go through with it. Only, Howard"—her eyes were grave and search-

ing as they met his—"are you going to run straight?"

"Straight?" He stared at her. "You mean— Oh, I—I've quite reformed, Phil!" He laughed a little. "I don't any longer make love to every pretty woman I see. I—I'm not often such an unspeakable, insufferable idiot as I was when I came in here first to-day. I'll be a model Benedick, Phil! That's what you meant, isn't it?"

"No," she said, and her eyes remained very serious. "That isn't what I meant. At least, it isn't all that I meant. Are you going to run straight about—money, Howard?"

"Money! Are you crazy? Who says I ever was anything but straight about money?"

"Only—I."

His jaw dropped as he stood looking down at her. Suddenly he seated himself.

"Now, then," he said bluntly, "let's have this thing out. So you think I haven't been square about money, eh?"

"I know it, Howard."

"Pouf!" He tried to laugh it off. "Say that to any man in the Street, and he'll tell you you're raving!"

Philippa was wearing one of the recently fashionable flat bags, heavily embroidered in silver, and swinging by silver cords from her girdle. With the same grave and rather sad look, she reached into it, and took out the bundle of papers that had so engrossed her earlier in the morning. She untied the bundle, and selected a letter that she held out to the man.

"From Senator Cowden," she said simply, "acknowledging your help in his campaign, and inclosing, so he says, a check for—"

With a smothered ejaculation, Burroughs snatched the letter; the veins stood out on his forehead as he read it. She carefully selected another.

"This is from Mr. Dacre, about that New Orleans transaction—"

Burroughs glared at her from congested eyes.

"Where did you get all this stuff?" he demanded.

"Does it matter?" she said, a trifle

warily. "All these letters were brought to me long ago. It—it was thought that I might want to make use of them. They seem to be genuine?"

His face was answer enough.

"And you have had these things all the time?" he said, with an effort.

"All the time."

The blood poured more and more darkly into the man's heavy, handsome face.

"Then, why in Heaven's name didn't you produce them during the divorce suit? With a big pull for sympathy like this—"

She looked at him—quite a gentle look.

"Did you ever know me to be really ungenerous, Howard?"

"No, hang it, I never did! Besides—you wanted to be free, anyhow."

"Yes," she said quietly, "I wanted to be free. But—I shouldn't have shown those letters, in any case, Howard."

"Why did you keep them, then?" he demanded suddenly and violently. "Why didn't you put them in the fire or the waste-paper basket? Since you say you've tried all through to be generous, why did you keep them?"

"I don't know, Howard—I don't really know!" she said, knitting her brows. "I never meant to use them, and yet I kept them. I— Oh, I wonder if you will believe me when I say that it seems to be almost psychical? *Something* made me keep these letters, would not let me throw them away. I have not even looked at them for fifteen years until this morning. Then—I decided, if necessary, to use them."

"With what object?" he demanded tersely.

"To save that girl, if there should be no other way. She is so young! And—you made me so very, very unhappy, Howard! I could not bear to think of another sensitive, loving, young thing being broken on the wheel of your egotism, and crushed by your sledge-hammer methods. I—I meant to frighten you into giving her up."

He was so angry that he forgot himself.

"You talk like a sort of guardian angel!" he said, with an unpleasant laugh. "No one would guess from your tone and attitude that you were——"

He had the grace to check himself.

Pippa rose quietly, slipping the papers back into the hanging bag with hands that shook a little.

"Don't you understand," she said, "that it's because of *that*—that I must act as I do? If I were—above reproach—I should have just so much less responsibility. It's because I have sinned that I must guard others from being hurt by sin. Oh, you don't understand—you don't understand! And I don't blame you! But try—try, Howard, to understand a little! The wrongs I have done and the mistakes I have made make me afraid of wrongs and mistakes! I must watch—always watch, and try to catch up ravelings wherever I find them. That is why"—she hesitated for just a breath, and then looked him full in the eyes—"that is why I—who would never have dreamed of using those papers for myself, or even of threatening the use of them—am not

ashamed to make that very threat for the sake of another woman."

He said nothing as he faced her, but his eyes held a furious question.

"I mean," said Pippa, "that *I hold those letters!* As long as you run straight, as long as you are faithful to your—wife—and do nothing in any degree disgraceful or dishonest—you have nothing to fear from me, and I wish you luck and happiness. But if I find out anything about you that is hurting her life and spoiling her youth—I'll *publish them in every paper in New York!*"

"A case of blackmail, I see!" he said sardonically. His florid face had turned as white as ashes.

"I suppose—that's—what it is!" said Pippa. She was very tired. "A case of blackmail——"

Suddenly, to the man's surprise, she began to cry.

"Be good to her, Howard!" she whispered through her tears. "Be good to her, and be good to *yourself!* I—I'd rather *die* than have to use those horrible letters!"



RECOGNITION

THOUGH I shall find thee robed in light,
And on thy brow, pure and serene,
A beauty more divinely bright
Than earth hath ever seen;

And though I dumbly strive to trace
The sweet, worn, human lines again
Within thy changed, seraphic face,
But strive, alas! in vain;

Thy voice shall wake the ancient thrill,
And through thy radiant disguise
I shall behold the old love still
Deep burning in thine eyes.

JAMES B. KENYON.

THE RING OF KOLHAPUR



AND out of the phantasmagoria, feverishly bizarre, came the knowledge that the Ring of Kolhapur had been taken from me. Above a hodge-podge of exotic sounds, I sensed a woman's deriding laughter; then, summoned by the magic of my dream, the woman appeared before me, tall, dark, and very beautiful. And upon her hand I caught the glimmer of my ring.

She stood motionless save for her laughter, while a seething city, huddled beneath a canopy of silver sky, made for her a background. Beyond her, in each dome and minaret of that far Eastern city of my dreams, a bell pealed everlastingly; while from a distant hill, cloaked in a mantle of turquoise haze, a cannon thundered my defeat so that all the world might hear.

It was the cannonading that brought me to the center of the cold and darkened room. At first it had been blurred, far away. But gradually it grew nearer, clear and arresting at the last, as if fired beside my bed. For the shadow of a second I stood shivering, not altogether with cold, in my thin pajamas. Downstairs a shutter banged with dull reverberation, materializing my dream's unreality. The commonplaceness of the sound brought back my wandering wits.

I approached the window, pushed the curtains aside, and looked out into the night. All was still except for the rushing winter wind and the distant rumble of an elevated train. A ghastly moon silvered the street and the park beyond; its haggard countenance had frightened

all the little stars away, only the big, brave ones remained. I lowered the window and the blind, switched on the lights.

It was ten minutes after two.

The telephone beside my bed jangled nervously, insistently, as if resuming a useless effort. It buzzed in my ear after I had lifted the receiver from its hook. Very faintly I heard a woman's voice, thin and pale. Her opening question was almost an appeal.

"Who is this?"

"Bert MacFarlaine," I told her.

A sob, pitifully suppressed, flung itself along the wire.

"And you?"

For a moment there was silence, then:

"They've given me the wrong number."

"It's a little trick they have," said I. Her voice quavered queerly.

"I'm dreadfully frightened."

"If there's anything I can do——"

"Would you be so kind?"

"Surely," I told her.

There was nothing else to say.

Her voice grew more calm, more alluring.

"My name is Middleton, Dora Middleton. I live with my father at thirteen Washington Square. Two shots, startlingly loud, just now awakened me, and I ran across the hall to father's room, to find him gone."

"Gone?" I echoed.

"Yes," she said. "And I am all alone."

"Shall I come to you?" I inquired.

"Would it be asking too much of you, a stranger?"

There was something in her tone that drew me on.

"Not at all. In fifteen minutes I'll be there."

"You're most kind to me," she breathed, "most——"

A gruff, boorish voice halted her murmured thanks, filled me with alarm. And, as if to verify my scarce formulated vagaries, I heard the voice of Dora Middleton, shrill, vibrant with terror, shrieking, "My God, oh, my God!" and calling my name time and time again:

"Mr. MacFarlaine! Mr. MacFarlaine!"

A crash, like that of a table overturning, came to my ear.

She called my name again, and her voice seemed far away.

"Don't resist," was my advice. "I'll come to you."

To this there was no intelligible reply, so I judged that the receiver had fallen from her hand, a hand trembling no doubt from fright. This meant that, while I could hear her every word, she could catch nothing I might say. None the less, she called me many times, terror unspeakable in her tone, a terror that made me feel absurdly inadequate, although there was nothing that I could do.

Of a sudden my name was clipped in two as if a heavy hand had been placed over the woman's mouth. For an eternal moment the wire sang softly to itself; then it brought me the sound of a struggle, another and a louder crash, a metallic click. Then silence. Either the wire had been cut, or the receiver had been banged upon its hook. In either case, for all the immediate aid that I could give, the Atlantic might as well have surged between Dora Middleton and me.

For a dozen heartbeats everything was still; then the clock upon the stairs chimed a quarter after two. Less than ten minutes ago I had been dreaming of my Ring of Kolhapur, and now I was setting forth upon a quixotic errand to assist a woman whom I had never seen in a struggle against I knew

not what. And in the afternoon I had been arguing that the days of romance were past, that the adventurous years were gone.

Although I had had the jewel in my hand an hour or so before, as I hastily drew on my clothes, the memory of the dream in which I had lost it haunted me. Suppose the ring had been taken from me! I branded the idea as absurd; but, absurd or not, it clung. So, now fully dressed, I determined to make sure of the ring before setting forth upon my nocturnal adventure. Peace of mind was worth the moment it would cost.

As I clattered through the cold, deserted house, I sought consolation in thoughts of Palermo—the vivid, sun-kissed bay, the villas nestling on the hills, Monte Pellegrino watching over all—for which I was leaving on the morrow. My man was spending his last evening with his family, and the other servants had gone on ahead. The rooms on the lower floor were dark and still; the shrouded furniture made of the familiar a spectral thing. And, locked securely in the cabinet, was the Ring of Kolhapur. I slipped it and my revolver into the pocket of my overcoat, and quit the house.

The moon, a ghostly lantern swinging overhead, showed a taxi pulsing down the avenue. I hailed the cab. Before it reached the curb, I had clambered in, giving the chauffeur the Washington Square address and an order to make haste. As we sped downtown, past monster hotels dotted here and there with tiny squares of light, I wondered was it death or something even worse to which I was hastening through the bitter, moonlit night.

I questioned myself to the hum of the driving chains. Who was Dora Middleton? What had become of her father? Who had fired the shots that she had heard? And what had been the cause of the screams that still rang in my ear, the struggle of which I had been an aural witness, and, above all, whose the brutal voice, whose the hand that had cut us off so abruptly? To these questions and many others I could

find no answer; I could make nothing of this jumbled prelude to adventure, and endeavored to crowd it out with other and pleasanter things.

From my pocket I took the ring, which had come into my possession the day before, the *pièce de résistance* of a collection of curious jewelry. Laying it on my palm, I watched it sparkle in the half light within the speeding cab. I had coveted it for a year or more for its historic rather than for its intrinsic value, although both were great. But the joy of ownership had been somewhat dimmed by the notoriety that had followed its passage through the customs.

The ring was an unusual one, speaking poignantly of an era long past and gone. Set in an alloy of silver streaked with gold were several red and orange jacinths and three pigeonblood rubies, placed in a haphazard fashion absolutely without design. Through their sparkling brilliance two dull-gold snakes were twined. Upon first sight, the jewel left an unpleasant impression; it was too barbaric for beauty. Yet it fascinated, as such a curiosity always does.

The cab slowed down as the massive arch came into view, lunarlit, unreal, bathed in a silver shower. I slipped the Ring of Kolhapur deep in my inner pocket, and drew forth a crumpled note for the chauffeur. A moment later we gained the curb. Number Thirteen, forbiddingly dark, rose before me in the shadow. I mounted the steps two at a time, entered the cavalike vestibule, rang the bell. There was no response.

Not knowing what each moment lost might mean, I tried the door. It opened easily. Revolver in hand, I entered the darkened hall, and felt my way toward where a flickering light silhouetted a superhuman hand upon the wall, a shadow hand that danced weirdly to a wavering flame. Then, down the curving stairs, a candle in one hand and the other guarding it, came the woman of my dream, the light shining full upon her face.

Standing there, halfway down the stairs, infolded, as it were, with light,

she made a picture that I would not forget even if I could. Her hair, black as the night, flowed from her forehead in ebon waves, beneath which one glimpsed the liquid darkness of her eyes. Between full, scarlet lips parted in surprise, the whiteness of her teeth caught the light, while her breath came and went in uneven little gasps. To me she seemed the living reincarnation of some East Indian princess of long ago, one for whom the Ring of Kolhapur might have been made.

My revolver dropped with a clatter to the floor.

It was then that she spoke.

"You!" she cried, and again: "You!"

"You're safe?" I questioned, my voice trembling from excitement. "Tell me you're unhurt."

She looked down upon me, nodded gently.

"Yes," she replied, "I'm quite all right, for the time being at any rate. But even so, I need your help, my friend. I could scarcely wait for you to come. It was fearful here alone."

She swayed, as if about to fall, and grasped the handrail for support. The candle tottered in its holder, there was a whirl of light, a star fell at my feet, and all was dark.

In silence the woman led the way upward into the soft, yellow glow that made itself visible at the stair's head. We entered a long, low, raftered room, lined with books from floor to ceiling, dim, candlelit. A fire bloomed upon the hearth like a warm, full-blown flower, and before it two chairs were drawn.

Dora Middleton motioned me to the larger one, and dropped into the other one herself. She looked worn and tired.

"Pray be seated," said she.

I obeyed.

She smiled across at me, and began quite simply to thank me for coming to her aid. I silenced her with a gesture.

"I dreamed of you," I told her, "and as I was dreaming, you called to me across the sleeping city. It was uncanny."

Grasping the arm of her chair, the

woman leaned perilously close to me. I could feel her warm, sweet breath upon my face. Her eyes, radiant stars, looked into mine.

"You dreamed of me?" she said softly, as if in the presence of something too sacred to be lightly spoken of. "And I dreamed of you, a strange, barbaric dream, into which you do not seem to fit at all. Is it not wonderful, my friend?"

I laid my hand on hers. The contact thrilled me through and through. She caught her breath as her hand trembled under mine.

I said:

"We must have met before."

And she replied:

"We have."

"It was in some other life," I breathed, "in some far-off Eastern land in the distant days when all the universe was young, when love was not the machine-made thing it is to-day."

She laughed softly to herself.

"Nothing so romantic," she informed me, drawing her hand away. "It was day before yesterday on the Third Avenue L. You sat across from me. I dropped my bag, and you recovered it."

I chuckled, for she spoke the truth.

"And then you stared so that I changed my seat. You were very rude, you know."

But, somehow, my rudeness called for no apology.

"We both got off at Fifty-ninth," she continued, "and you walked in the direction of Fifth Avenue, and I—well, I didn't. And that is where we met, kind sir, and that is where we parted."

Thus, almost gayly, we began upon the business that had brought me, and my hand again sought hers in sympathy. She told me how, after hearing the shots and discovering her father gone, she had, in an attempt to communicate with a friend, been given my number in mistake; how in the midst of our conversation a strange man, masked, had entered the room, followed by another, revolver in hand.

Although nearly paralyzed with terror, she had managed to call to me until one of them had silenced her rough-

ly. In her struggle a table had been overturned. Then, quite suddenly, the men had fled, frightened by the commotion they had made. She had turned to the telephone again, to find it torn up by the roots, further communication impossible. And—and—that was all.

There was silence absolute until a smoldering log broke in two and fell noisily to the hearth. Myriads of stars swam upward and disappeared. Together we watched the fire; I thinking how brave she had proven herself to be, she thinking I know not what. And now, after all, I cannot but wonder what was in her mind as she sat there beside me, the flickering firelight upon her sweet, thoughtful face, her hand in mine.

"No doubt you heard the table overturn," said she, breaking the tender stillness that had come between us. "You must have wondered what it was."

"Yes," said I, "I heard. It brought me to you even more quickly than I would otherwise have come."

"Thank you again, dear friend," she said. "You were, indeed, a friend in need. I am glad that you are here."

"And your father?" I inquired. "What has become of him?"

For reply she buried her face in her hands and cried softly. Although I had been the unthinking cause of this outburst, there was nothing that I could do but feel uncomfortable.

"You won't leave me?" she sobbed. "You'll remain until father returns? Promise me that you will."

I promised.

For what seemed a long while we sat before the dying fire and talked of many things. It appeared that she and her father had just returned from abroad, and had stopped overnight at their town house to procure clothing before going south for the season. Hence the absence of electric lights, the cold bareness of the rooms.

But Dora Middleton became more and more nervous as the moments dragged on, so, other conversation failing to distract her, I showed her the Ring of Kolhapur.

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "How beautiful it is!"

"Do you know the legend of the ring?" I asked.

"How should I?" she returned.

With closed eyes she listened, head on hand, as I began.

"It was made for a princess who ruled in Kolhapur, many, many years ago; a princess whose dark loveliness was probably much like yours. Be that as it may, it was stolen from her by a lover whom she had trusted. This lover fled to another land and to another maiden, and—so goes the tale—she never saw him or the ring again, for she died soon after of a broken heart."

"Poor princess!" murmured the woman, ring in hand.

"And from that day to this the ring has brought nothing but ill fortune, which, according to the legend, will continue until the jewel returns to the princess for whom it was made. For—mind you!—first in one reincarnation, then in another, the princess is searching for the ring. She will know no rest until it is hers again."

She slipped the ring upon her finger.

"It seems to belong there," I informed her laughingly.

"It does," she said seriously; then smiled at my surprise.

And as if she feared the thing, she passed it back to me and began to pace the long, shadowed room. While her back was turned, I glanced at my watch; it was half past three. I was growing sleepy, and wondered how much longer I should have to remain.

The sound of a door closing somewhere on the lower floor broke the stillness of the huge, empty house. As a man's footsteps became audible upon the stairs, the woman gave a sigh of relief. I slipped the ring back into its hiding place next to my hammering heart, arose, and faced the door.

"Father, father!" she cried, a wondrous blending of tears and joy in her voice. "Where have you been?"

A tall, slim, rather handsome man entered the room, wrapped in a heavy coat. I was astonished that he should be so young—I had subconsciously pic-

tured her father as an older man. He showed not the slightest surprise upon finding his daughter entertaining a stranger in his library at half after three in the morning.

"Father," said the young woman sweetly, as she turned to where I stood trying with remarkable unsuccess to appear at ease, "this is Mr. MacFarlane. He has been so kind——"

I bowed.

"Hell!" he said roughly. "We'll cut that out and get to business. That's what we'll do."

Before I could recover from my astonishment, I was gazing into a revolver that the man had whipped from the pocket of his overcoat. He laughed a horrid, brutal laugh, and, in a flash, I knew this to be the man whose voice had come to me over the telephone.

"Well," he sneered, "you're a smart one, you are!"

"Thank you," said I ironically.

"Where's the ring?"

"What ring?" I asked, as calmly as I could.

"The Ring of Kolhapur."

The woman saved me the trouble of a reply.

"He's got it with him, the fool, so you made the trip for nothing. But, believe me, it was easy to hold him for you! He's as sentimental as a school-girl. Well, dearie, here it is. The ring's in the inside pocket of his coat. His gun is on the hall floor, where he dropped it when all but overcome by my Oriental beauty. The lamb is ready for the sacrifice, and the sacrifice is ready for the lamb."

I dropped into a chair before the smoldering fire and watched the newcomer draw closer and closer, until his revolver was directly beneath my nose.

"The ring," demanded the man. "Give it to me, or I'll take it by force."

Realizing my helplessness, I placed the jewel in his outstretched hand, watched it sparkle as he admired it in the candlelight, saw it disappear in the pocket of his coat. He laughed, more softly now, and less unpleasantly, and the woman joined him. And I could not

but smile at the readiness with which I had walked into the trap.

He turned to the woman.

"Dora," he said, "you'd better get your hat and cloak. In a moment we must be leaving."

She quit the room, a candle in her hand.

He sat across from me, his eyes upon my face, a pistol on his knee.

"May I ask a few questions?" I inquired.

There were several things I wanted explained.

"Fire ahead," he said pleasantly.

I began.

"Is this your house?"

"No," he laughed, "but it does belong to the Middletons, who are in Europe. We borrowed it for the evening. A candle or two, an open fire, the telephone, and you. Voilà! The thing was quite complete."

"And the two shots, the masked men, and all the rest?"

"Fiction," he returned, a charming smile upon his intelligent face; "fiction, impure and quite complex. We were in Paris when you bought the ring, and a false and duplicate jewel is no trouble to procure, especially of so famous a piece as the Ring of Kolhapur."

From his waistcoat pocket he took the imitation and held it before me. Although a clever bit of counterfeiting, I could have detected its spuriousness in half a second, even in the candlelight.

"We realized that it might be useless for a year or more," he continued, "but a kindly fate played into our hands. The daily papers announced the arrival of the ring, also that you were leaving for abroad. The devil, caring for his own, led me to the customs Saturday afternoon, where I saw you. He whispered into my ear that you couldn't possibly get to your deposit box till Monday, so must keep the jewel until then. And this is Sunday night, or, to be quite correct, early Monday morning. So you see the penalty you fashionables pay for having your every move, your every purchase, chronicled in the press."

"So you've been to my house," I said.

"What do you suppose we got you here for?"

"To help a lady in distress."

He smiled at my credulity.

"You read too many novels, I'm afraid," he said.

I thanked him for his information.

"And now," he went on, rising, revolver in hand, "I'm afraid I'll have to tie you to your chair before my departure. Though unpleasant, it will not be fatal. You'll probably free yourself by dawn, when we will be far away."

He called to the woman. She entered at once, bringing the taper with her, triumph written large upon her face. She was hatted and coated as when I had first seen her on the Third Avenue L. And she was very beautiful—the woman of my dream, who had stood motionless against a silver sky, laughing.

Her pseudo-father handed her the revolver with an order to shoot if I made the slightest move. I looked up at her, at the contemptuous curve of her lower lip, at the disdainful flash of her eyes, and felt myself a worm. To tell the truth, I closed my eyes so that I might not witness my own humiliation.

The man returned, a heavy, twisted curtain cord in hand, and, while the woman held the pistol to my head with a hand that trembled not at all, he bound my wrists together behind the chair in which I sat; bound them tightly, knot after knot. But—I can't explain just how—the woman's scornful glance had killed what little feeling I had left. For the time being, even her contempt mattered little.

Having fastened me as tightly as he could, he took the revolver and slipped it into the pocket of his coat, which he hung over his arm. The woman, a Burne-Jones figure in the uncertain light, extinguished the candles one by one, until but two flung their illumination against the darkness lurking in the corners of the room. One of these she took, and gave the other to the man. Thus they started for the door, he leading the way.

Suddenly, as if the idea had just oc-

curred to her, the woman turned to where I sat helpless and alone, my hands bound behind me, and, stooping down to the level of my eyes, gazed into my soul. There was an angry flush upon her splendid face, an unspeakable distaste in her eyes. Her breath seemed driven from between her slightly uneven teeth in hot, irregular little gasps.

"You coward!" she sneered, and then again: "You coward!"

And turning her back upon me, she, too, passed into the hall.

There was something in her tone, rather than in her words, that maddened me. For a moment scarlet grotesques danced insanely before my eyes, while all about a bloody chaos reigned. My muscles gained a more than human strength, and a second later, by some miracle of anger, my hands were free. Beyond the dancing shapes I glimpsed the man just starting down the steps.

Rushing toward the open door, I flung myself full length upon a rug as a boy flings himself upon his sled, and slid along the polished hard-wood floor into the hall in time to grasp his ankles as he was preparing to descend.

My opponent grabbed for a marble Venus that stood in a niche halfway down the stairs, and pulled it crashing from its ledge, which added to the confusion. The woman, all poise and self-control scattered before the unexpected, screamed time and time again from the upper landing; while the man, first beneath me, then above, cursed horridly.

After an eternity the bottom was reached. The man, breathing hard, was on top of me, and I told myself dully that I was beaten once again, that I had only won that I might lose. Hopelessly I relaxed, to feel something hard pressing painfully into my back, and I wondered what the cause of my suffering might be. Then I remembered. Summoning all my remaining strength, I turned my opponent upon his back when he least expected it, and, before he realized what I was about, my revolver was in my hand.

He struck at me savagely.

I sat upright.

"Don't move," I warned him. "I've found my gun."

I heard the woman start down the stairs, sobbing softly to herself, apparently all unnerved by the turn events had taken.

"Stand where you are," I shouted, "or else I'll shoot."

She obeyed without a word.

I turned my attention to the man.

"Give me my ring," I demanded.

He placed it in my palm without speaking.

As I dropped the jewel in my pocket he, thinking me off guard, grasped the hand that held the revolver. There was a loud report that all but deafened me, and a meteor slashed the gloom. The man fell back with a dismal thud, a groan upon his lips. From the stairs came a woman's piercing cry, a fall, then silence, save for a ringing in my ears.

Quickly, driven by a harrowing fear, I made for the door. After a moment's fumbling I found the latch and left the house, closing the door behind me. The street was deserted. The cold, early-morning air went to my head like wine. None the less, the fear of which I spoke dogged me to my very door.

When I awakened, it was to find a smiling sun peeping through the curtains of my room, a cheery fire upon the hearth. My disheveled condition informed me that the nightmarish events with which my brain was filled were as real as—as real as—

I felt at once for the ring—my Ring of Kolhapur—which had caused me such a night of adventure and distress as I trust will never come into my life again.

A light step caused me to look up. Coming softly toward me was the woman of my adventure, and on her hand sparkled the Ring of Kolhapur. The Ring of Kolhapur? I blinked and looked closer. No. The fitful flicker of the fire reflected upon the small glass bottle which she— With a groan I sank weakly back upon my pillow. My nurse was bringing me my medicine again.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

D A FIRST NIGHTER

TWO new playwrights have come upon the boards this season thus far, and it is conceded that they both show qualities that may mean permanent success.

Frederick Ballard came to Broadway with a bright—yes, a really bright—farce, called “Believe Me, Xantippe.” It continues to run.

“Believe Me, Xantippe,” was the prize play at Harvard last year. The author was at Harvard, picking up extra learning in literature and dramatic art. He was properly ripe for a college course in the niceties and the enunciated laws of drama, because he had spent two years or more in actual stage experience as a super, a property man, and, indeed, in any capacity in a theater for which he could induce any manager to engage him. And, furthermore, he chose to acquire this experience in Chicago, where the theater is neither fictitious nor faddy, as it is so largely in New York.

After these two years of learning the tangle and material actualities of his craft, and applying them to the desire and the instinct for playwriting that moved him, he did what we believe to be the wisest thing of all for any artist-who-would-be. The young man went home to his West. He went a-cowboying in Colorado, ranching, riding, and getting in touch with nature, giving himself a chance to digest his

experience and his ideas without the continuous clamorous intrusion that makes original thinking on Broadway almost an impossibility.

It is not the buzz of traffic that interferes with original thinking on Broadway. The clamor is not the street car's clanging. It is the glaring self-assertiveness of the massed mediocrity that makes up Broadway's one idea.

The author of “Believe Me, Xantippe,” came originally from Lincoln, Nebraska. He had taken his degree at the State University before he came East to study the wiles of the theater. That may be why he picked upon Chicago instead of New York in which to get experience behind the footlights.

The play was much revised for New York after winning John Craig's prize and running ten weeks at his stock theater in Boston. This process may have bettered it greatly—and it may be the cause of the visible defects. Revising for Broadway does not always mean improving a play. Because the minor characters seem to be mere shells, this reviewer is inclined to think that the revision is responsible for at least this one lack. To eliminate character in the minor rôles seems to be a primary law with most New York producers, whereas an author of any talent at all instinctively characterizes in some degree all the parts in his play. To him they are real “folks,” as much so as the principals.

If there are no indications of greatness in Mr. Ballard's farce, there is spontaneity, there are a freshness of humor and of viewpoint and a big breeziness that have certainly made it a hit.

Richard Carle and Hattie Williams, with Dorothy Webb adding her own unstarred and unfeatured attractiveness, have a bright enough musical-comedy affair, in "The Doll Girl." The story is the usual musical-comedy story—it is marvelous how these stories repeat themselves! But the usual story in this case has some clever incidents and a song or two to help it out, besides the always amusing Mr. Carle and the always buxom and healthy Miss Williams.

Dorothy Webb, the talented daughter of a comic-opera line—ancestral, not written—lives up to the traditions of the family and the demands of talent. She is chic, dainty, intelligent, and knows how to dance and sing and frolic with grace and finesse, as well as with cleverness and speed. The production possesses some brilliance, which adds to the agreeable picture. Not the least item is the large and brightly costumed chorus.

Another musical piece that has won to that degree of favor which means that it will be sent to other cities next season is "The Marriage Market." In this Donald Brian continues to hold the favor of the New York public, which has been very much pleased with Mr. Brian for some seasons. He has the support of three winsome ladies, Venita Fitzhugh, Carroll McComas, and Moya Mannering. This is a fetching trio, with both charm and talent.

Earl Dorr Biggers' book, "Seven Keys to Baldpate," which has brought laughter and thrills into many hall bedrooms, has been dramatized successfully, and is one of the early season's hits. Wallace Eddinger heads the cast.

Stanley Houghton, who wrote the much-discussed "Hindle Wakes," is the author of "The Younger Generation," in which Grace George has just opened her season at the Lyceum. Miss George has beauty, appeal, comedy, and more technique than most of our lady

stars. She would be twice the actress she is if she feared not to branch out, and if she could have artistic guidance in her efforts to develop versatility and depth.

Houghton's views of life and drama are too deeply touched with the theorist's egotism. In his own person he may not be at all egotistical, but to the degree to which he is a theorist—it is a high and assertive degree in his case—he is an egotist.

His drama, "Hindle Wakes," is now touring the country, as well as occupying space on the counters of the bookstores. It is a complete example of the disintegrating social and ethical philosophy that taints the minds of so many of the younger "intellectuals" in this period of transition. Because of old errors, caught up anew and glossed in fresh forms, apostles of these errors appear. They gain some éclat, and are talked about because of the bravado with which they cry aloud these old errors, now called by them their own "original ideas."

For the purpose of finding a larger world in which to beat their tomtoms, they enter the dramatist's sphere. Sometimes, as in Houghton's case, they possess some skill in character drawing, at least in the externals of character which catch the indiscriminating attention of the public. Generally, also, they have a sufficient degree of dramatic sense to enable them to introduce a few incidents and at least one good situation. The latter always suffers, however, because the philosophy or thesis is introduced in it, and used to club the drama to death.

In other words, if these authors did not wish either to shock or to censure the world, they would not write plays. The play, as an art form and as a medium for expressing truths human and divine, does not appeal to them. It does not appeal as the wherewithal to amuse, entertain, or happyfy the public. The public is left out of it. The whole desire is to draw attention to the author as a brave soul who has broken down the "conspiracy of silence" on some objectionable topic.

The "conspiracy of silence" is a new, high-sounding, and sense-distorting phrase for plain good taste. The subject of "Hindle Wakes" is offensive to good taste, besides being uninteresting for the stage. Neither drama nor nature is expressed in the spectacle of a young woman claiming the so-called rights of "free love" on the basis of her economic independence and consequent masculine privileges.

The play has served its purpose, however; it has caused its author to be noticed!

By far the most interesting event of the season is not associated with New York. This is the establishment of Frank Reicher as leading actor and director of the Little Theater, in Philadelphia. It is the first effort for a repertory theater in America which has had a good chance of success, because of having a man of unusually fine histrionic talent to lead it and financial aid that is adequate and that is unhampered by faddy or unæsthetic control.

Mrs. Beulah Jay, who owns the Little Theater, is a woman of taste and culture, with a genuine love for dramatic art. She has built her theater with the intent of accomplishing real things, of producing good plays by foreign and American authors, and of making the theater and the company a genuine and permanent institution for the furtherance of dramatic art in America. To this end she has engaged Mr. Reicher to act and to direct and to assist her in shaping the policy of the institution.

In writing of Mr. Reicher's art, we find it necessary to keep strict watch over our pen; it is so easy to let it run away. It is but a mild statement of fact to say that in a decade no actor has created such an impression as Mr. Reicher made during three successive seasons in "The Scarecrow," as *Ferraud* in "The Pigeon," and as *Benedick* in "Much Ado About Nothing." His ability to transform his person into the bodily likeness of his rôle, as he conceived it, was something that Broadway rarely experiences. There was much more than this, however—there was the melodious voice, excellently modulated,


the diction, and, most of all, the authoritative presentation of a picture of life poetically conceived.

These abilities suggest more than individual creation; they suggest the capacity for leading and directing the abilities of others. It is significant of Mrs. Jay's own artistic quality that she has selected an actor of Mr. Reicher's stamp to help her establish her theater.

During his dozen years in America, Mr. Reicher has had a varied experience. He has played a great many different parts in the legitimate and in vaudeville. In the latter he made a signal success in a fantastic dancing-and-pantomime act. His first pronounced success in drama was as *Herod* in Sudermann's "John the Baptist." He had been producing director for Henry B. Harris for several seasons, when Mr. Harris decided to present Percy Mackaye's fantastic play, "The Scarecrow," and gave Mr. Reicher the part that enabled him to rise into the front rank, a position his later work has maintained for him.

The aim of the Little Theater, as conceived by Mrs. Jay and Mr. Reicher, is practical, artistic, and altogether achievable, though there are difficulties in its path. It is to establish a company that shall work as a unit, each member content to do his own part to make the whole a success. There will always be "favorites" as long as the public exercises its function of choice; but there will be no stellar or featured players in the Little Theater. All will have equal opportunity, according to their abilities.

The repertoire for the first season of thirty weeks, now opening with "The Elder Brother," a serious play of the "chamber-drama" type, by Donald McLaren, will take in modern American and European plays, costume romances, historic plays, and fantastic comedy. The purpose in this is not only to produce good plays, but to bring back the not lost, but mislaid, art of acting to our stage. The audiences will see the players in a dozen rôles widely different each season. They will attach their affections to the talent, and not to the personality.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

ROBERT HICHENS' new book, "The Way of Ambition," published by Frederick A. Stokes Company, is disappointing, because it is reasonable to expect that a trained and experienced novelist would have risen to the possibilities of a theme as big and vital and dramatic as the one presented in this story.

Mr. Hichens had a chance to write a really great psychological novel, but verbosity and diffuseness have spoiled it, and one is left, after reading almost five hundred pages, in a state of uncertainty as to whether or not Claude Heath was a genuine musical genius or merely a dilettante with a little talent.

His genius, if he really possessed it, was thwarted and defeated by the ambition of his wife, whose determination to "be somebody" blinded her to her husband's artistic interests. Having become convinced that opera offered a musician the only road to fame and position, she saw no reason why a man who could write acceptable songs and Te Deums should not, with equal facility, turn his hand to dramatic composition. The result was what might have been expected.

The theme is a simple one, and it is comparatively new in fiction, in spite of the fact that in the everyday life of humanity the meddling in the intellectual and spiritual affairs of others is a commonplace, especially in conjugal and domestic relations.

If, with such material, Mr. Hichens had condensed his narrative, concentrated his plot, and vitalized his character, he would have produced a big story.

A fairly entertaining story is Nelson Lloyd's "David Malcolm," published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

One of its chief merits is that it is a book without any pretense of being other than a story; it has no "purpose," and it points no moral. It makes use of certain types and depicts some local color, but it is essentially no more than a love story, and some of the situations are extremely well done.

The opening scenes, describing David's first encounters with the "Professor" and Penelope, are original and interesting, and are written in a style that makes it all very plausible.

After the "Professor's" flight from Malcolmville, and Penelope's subsequent departure with her uncle, the Pittsburgh ironmaster, the interest begins to sag, for the narrative has to do with the more or less familiar details of David's adventures as a cub reporter in New York.

From this point to the conclusion of the book, the seasoned novel reader is able to anticipate the substance of what follows, and he is beguiled into finishing the story only in the hope of encountering something fresh in setting and color.



Popular superstitions concerning "Wall Street" continue to supply material to authors, not only of rural editorials and magazine articles, but of fiction as well.

In Maximilian Foster's novel, "The Whistling Man," published by D. Appleton & Co., Hilda Gawtreay, who is really a very attractive young woman, offers, by way of warning to the un-

sophisticated hero, the portentous statement that "in Wall Street men have no friends, they have only acquaintances. In Wall Street no man trusts any one. They dare not. The stakes are too great; the greed, the risks too vast! Down there it is a merciless scramble for money, Mr. Craig, nothing else."

Naturally, Mr. Craig is astonished, apparently, because, as the author gravely adds: "No English girl he'd ever met, much less any girl in France, could have displayed such information."

Mr. Craig has spent nineteen years abroad with his father, who has seemed to live in constant terror of a mysterious whistling man. Upon the death of the elder Craig, the son returns to New York, bent upon solving the mystery that shadowed his father's life, respecting which the latter always maintained an obstinate silence.

In spite of all sorts of warnings of danger threatened by "Wall Street," young Craig persists. He meets one person after another, each of whom in turn declares to him that he must know the secret of his father's life. It is the iteration and reiteration of this that keeps the story going long enough to make a novel of standard length.

When it comes to the dénouement, the narrative moves quickly enough, and the action and situations are exciting and dramatic, but it is preceded by so much uninteresting byplay that the reader is too weary to enjoy it.



"WO₂," by Maurice Drake, published by E. P. Dutton & Co., is an extremely interesting and well-told story, with an ingenious plot.

A deposit of tungsten-dioxide in Holland, known only to an English chemist named Ward, and one or two of his associates, is the fact upon which the story is based. Inasmuch as the market price of this substance is two hundred and forty pounds a ton, there is, of course, ample motive to turn the secret to commercial advantage.

The story is told by James Carthew-West, a well-born young Englishman,

once an officer on an ocean liner, but, at the opening of the tale, reduced almost to vagabondage, and drifting about the coast towns of Devonshire. Ward picks him up, puts him in command of a vessel locally known as a "ketch," and charts the boat to carry cargoes to and from Holland.

Ignorant of the business in which he is employed, West makes several voyages uneventfully, until finally trouble begins through the agency of Austin Voogat, a London newspaper man, who comes to him as a tramp sick with consumption. Voogat's newspaper training and instinct warn him that there is something peculiar about the business, and he begins to investigate.

The story is further complicated by the appearance of a company of Germans, who, in some manner, have discovered the secret of the deposits, and naturally want their share.

The story, in spite of its improbabilities, is made plausible by West's matter-of-fact style of narrative, and given variety and color by the presence of the attractive Pamela Brand, a young woman of much energy, enterprise, and shrewdness.

Altogether, it is an excellent tale.



A story of the Tennessee mountains that is destitute of any reference to moonshiners and "revenooers" is more or less of a novelty, and to that extent at least Frances Nimmo Green's book, "The Right of the Strongest," published by Charles Scribner's Sons, is welcome.

It may or may not be without significance that this story belongs to the industrial or business type, but those who wish to do so may fairly assume that the rapid development of manufactures in the South is having its effect upon Southern fiction.

The plot of "The Right of the Strongest" turns upon the conflict between John Marshall, of Birmingham, who has come up into the mountains to secure land for water rights, and Mary Elizabeth Dale, a native of the region, who is determined to protect her neigh-

bors from the encroachments of "predatory wealth."

Mary Elizabeth has been educated in Mobile, apparently for the express purpose of spreading the gospel of "sweetness and light" among the mountaineers; and, when she discovers Marshall's business with her friends, she sets herself against him and strives with all the intensity of youthful fanaticism to defeat him.

The narrative develops, as may be expected, into a love story; but, in spite of this, the duel is prolonged—not, however, at the expense of interest and suspense—mainly because the respective parties have very clear ideas of right and wrong, from their different points of view, and are more or less obstinate in their adherence to them.

The story is well told, and all the minor characters, especially Uncle Beck and Shan Thaggin, are very much alive.



One of the newest types of Western stories is Sarah Comstock's "The Soddy," published by Doubleday, Page & Co.

The Indian-and-cowboy story has, like everything else in the West, yielded to what optimists like to call "the advance of civilization," and we have now, in place of these good old-fashioned tales of adventure, stories having for their themes railroading, mining, irrigation, and, as in Miss Comstock's book, homesteading.

That there can be, in such a homely theme as this, enough of the element of the drama, enough action and suspense to make an interesting story, the author has amply demonstrated.

In Dexter Hayden's struggles to es-

tablish himself in his sod house on the prairie and to raise his crops, though his conflict was with natural forces rather than with hostile Indians, Miss Comstock has obviously dealt with facts and circumstances with which she is acquainted from personal experience, and has handled them with the instinct of a genuine story-teller.

It is a very human story of hope and disappointment, achievement and defeat, hate and love, with complexity of plot and variety of character and action to keep the reader's interest constantly alive.

It is a refreshingly wholesome and spontaneous story, exceedingly welcome in the midst of the flood of sordid and disgusting white-slave yarns.

Important New Books

- "Fatima," Rowland Thomas; Little, Brown & Co.
 "Love in a Hurry," Gellert Burgess; Bobbs-Merrill Co.
 "A Little Green World," J. E. Buckrose; G. P. Putnam's Sons.
 "Otherwise Phyllis," Meredith Nicholson; Houghton, Mifflin Co.
 "Marsh Lights," Helen Huntington; Charles Scribner's Sons.
 "The Jackknife Man," Ellis Parker Butler; Century Co.
 "The Argyle Case," Arthur Hornblow; Harper & Bros.
 "Threads of Gray and Gold," Myrtle Reed; G. P. Putnam's Sons.
 "The Desired Woman," Will N. Harben; Harper & Bros.
 "A Modern Eve," May Edington; F. A. Stokes Co.
 "Diamond Cut Diamond," Jain Bunker; Bobbs-Merrill Co.
 "Joyous Gard," Arthur C. Benson; G. P. Putnam's Sons.
 "Shallows," Frederick Watson; E. P. Dutton & Co.
 "The Iron Trail," Rex Beach; Harper & Bros.
 "Round the Corner," Gilbert Cannan; D Appleton & Co.



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

WE believe that the fiction in a successful magazine of entertainment is truer to life than most of the facts recorded in your daily newspaper. Truth may sometimes be stranger than fiction, but fiction is often truer than truth. Two interesting examples of this paradox have recently come to our attention.

About the time that Leonard Merrick's delightful story in this number, reached us, the New York *Evening Mail* printed the following letter, giving the unhappy lady's name:

"DEAR EDITOR: For seven years I have been a clothes model in some of the biggest shops in New York. I have been constantly admired by some of the wealthy and prominent women in the United States. I have spent all these years among gowns, hats, and other women's garments which are often worth a king's ransom.

"I have, perhaps, learned to ape the ways of the wealthy to some extent, though I believe that my beauty and charm—what I have—was naturally bettered by my experience as a manikin.

"Recently a young man to whom I have been engaged has jilted me with the following excuses:

"You are too vain for me.

"A woman who has received as much admiration as you must be fickle.

"No woman can wear gowns worth thousands and then come down to a twenty-dollar suit for life.

"I cannot give you the flattery you would necessarily expect after being admired by people day after day for years."

"Do you agree with this ridiculous statement?"

"I do not. I am not vain, not selfish, have always regarded my work as strictly professional, and have never allowed my head to be turned by anything wealthy customers in the shops might have said."

Here, in part, is the reply of one of the *Mail's* "home page" heart specialists:

"Weak and foolish and silly indeed must be the girl who would allow the mere professional wearing of fine gowns to turn her head!

"And silly must be the man who would say that no woman can go through seven years of constant flattery without being totally spoiled as a wife . . . I would like to give this young man a good 'raking over the coals.'

"He has a lot to learn about women and about your kind. I assume that, being a successful model, you are pretty, have an attractive form and good breeding. These qualifications are essential in this calling. This being the case by all the laws of womankind you should not be 'spoiled' by your job.

"Adulation should enoble every sentiment you have if you are the woman I think you are."

After further diagnosis, the heart healer applies this soothing balm:

"You would, no doubt, find him a jealous, suspecting person, always ready to find fault, never contented that you are interested in him, eager to cough up to you the things of which he speaks now.

"Thank him for letting you find out his traits now rather than instead of after marriage. He has done you a service which you cannot ever repay. Part with him a friend, but part.

"Don't forget that."

Compare the above story of real life with Merrick's "Floromond and Frisonette." Leave out the question of comparative entertainment. Which do you find the more convincing? Which is truer to life—the facts, or the fiction?

Nor is our contention that fiction is truer than truth confined to prose. Do you remember Nalbro Bartley's Philippine story in September AINSLEE'S? "The Peripatetic Pagan," a roguish old parrot with rare linguistic accomplishments, took particular delight in ren-

dering this French version of "Ta-ra-ra-ra boom-deay":

"Ticket, tramway, clergyman,
Bifteck, rumsteak rosbif, van,
Sanwich, witbait, lady, lunch,
Chéri-gobbler, viskey ponche,
Aoh-yes, alright, shoking, stop!
Pèle-êle, vy-not? moton chop,
Plumkek, miousik, steamer box,
Boule-dogue, hif-lif, five o'clocks,
Ta-ra-ra-ra boom-deay!"

Nalbro Bartley found the above in an old copy of an English weekly which professed to have gathered it firsthand in France. We might have suspected! It is too characteristic to be true; too true to be anything but fiction. The English paper pirated it from an essay by Harry Thurston Peck, in *The Bookman*, eight years ago, and it has since been included in Mr. Peck's collected writings.

CONSTANCE SKINNER'S story, "Give Hand and Follow," which called forth so much praise in this country when it was published in AINSLEE'S, is now attracting the attention of British critics. Hilary Leith Sanyon, in a review in *The New Purpose*, writes:

"We venture to say that only one of the New World could have written 'Give Hand and Follow.' Is has the sweeping march, the 'up-and-onward-ever' call that sings in the title. It demands that favorite American adjective 'big.' It shows the ability to compose the emotions for full orchestra, so to speak. It has passages of description which are pure art, and a lyric which we shall hum to ourselves when next we go vagabonding through our own Surrey lanes. We do not take a Master's name lightly. Therefore we do not compare this story with any story of Kipling's. Yet we will dare to say that since reading 'Love o' Women' we have read nothing that approximates the poignant beauty and human intensity of that masterpiece until we mused on the self-revelations of Sheba, the gypsy wife, with her Devonshire tongue, in 'Give Hand and Follow.'"

Miss Skinner contributes a story to the

January AINSLEE'S, which also, in our opinion, justifies the use of "that favorite American adjective—'big.'" It is an entirely new handling of the old triangle problem. In this case the triangle has two big sides—they're the two women, and one very small side, which is the man. "At the Judgment Seat" is the story's title.



THE January AINSLEE'S will be our Christmas number, and while it has never been our policy to print a Christmas story because it is a Christmas story at the sacrifice of a better tale that has to do with some other time of the year, you will find a strong holiday flavor to many of the contributors. Notable among these are the complete novel, an absorbing mystery romance, by Kate Jordan; "The Cat and the Fiddle," a charming little tale of Christmas in the Latin Quarter, by Molly Elliott Seawell; "Mirror, Mirror," a powerful story of the Southern mountains, by Nalbro Bartley; and "The Lost Baby," one of the most appealing stories of Anna Alice Chapin's "Woman With a Past" series.

Leonard Merrick, Frank Condon, and Robert Emmet MacAlarney, who have so greatly added to your entertainment in the present issue, will also contribute to the coming number.

And last, but far from least, we are going to start the new year off with the opening tale of one of the most fascinating series we have ever given you. I. A. R. Wylie, who wrote "The Paupers of Portman Square," is the author; Sandy McGrab, a bra' Highland lad, is the hero, and next month's AINSLEE'S is the starting point of his romantic adventures. Goodness knows where he will lead us before he's through.

This is the time when publishers issue general announcements of their plans for the coming year. We would like to have you take this coming January number as indicating in a general way what we hope to accomplish during 1914.

We can think of no more alluring prospectus.

HOW WEAK EYES ARE STRENGTHENED BY EXERCISE

By C. Gilbert Percival, M. D.

IN this, which is undoubtedly the most active period in the history of man, every one of our faculties is called on to do more, and to respond to a longer continued extraordinary strain than ever before.

"Take things easy" may be very good advice, but most of us, who know how our competitors are hustling, fear that the practice of it would furnish us with a free seat on a bench in the park, instead of a cash income.

More energy, more concentration, are required to keep up with the leaders nowadays—hence our nervous exhaustion is greater. Busy city life with its clang, clatter and rush, even most of our time-saving inventions and modes of travel keep the nerves on edge, and give them no opportunity to rest during our waking hours.

Now the eye is one of the most delicate centers of the nervous system. This is clearly proven by the fact that the first place a physician looks for symptoms of paralysis is at the base of the optic nerve—if there are none in evidence it is taken as positive proof that there is no danger.

This will clearly evidence that nerve exhaustion means eye exhaustion and finally eye affection if nothing be done to correct it.

If, however, the blood circulation in the eyes is kept normal by the proper kind of simple and safe exercise, they continue healthy, normal and strong.

Besides this nervous strain that I speak of there are many other features of modern life which tax the eyes unduly.

Our schooling, once confined to the simple rudiments of education, is now so extended that the books of a schoolchild of today would cause a child of thirty years ago to look aghast—hence at the threshold of practical life we start to unduly tax our eyes.

The glitter of city streets—the speed of traffic—the riding in fast trains—the viewing of scenery from train windows as it flashes quickly by—and above all, the

habit of reading every time we have the opportunity in our busy careers, under all sorts of unfavorable conditions—these all add to the extraordinary burden which our eyes are asked and expected to carry without assistance of any kind.

And, remember that though your arms may rest, your body may recline and every limb and other sense may be to a great extent, dormant at times; your eyes are always seeing unless they are closed—always active during every waking hour.

Hardly any wonder, then, that eye strain is so common and up to recently so many have had to call on artificial aid in order to see at all.

You know the eye is just like a little camera. It has the lens with the iris opening which enlarges and contracts agreeably to the amount of light existing. It also has a dark chamber which may be compared to a camera bellows, and the retina corresponding to the sensitive plate. It has three sets of muscles—one turns the eyes in any direction, one controls the iris, and one operates the focus.

When, through nervous exhaustion or over-taxation, the circulation of blood in the eyes becomes weaker than is normal, these muscles become flabby and refuse to act up to their usual standard, and the eyes do not focus easily if at all. Premature old-sight is the result.

The muscles still do their best to focus properly; eagerly struggle and strain to properly do the work which your brain commands them to do—strain and struggle so hard, in fact, that they affect the tired nerves, and not only cause headaches of which this is the most fruitful cause, but put the entire nervous system under a pressure which extends to the stomach and digestive organs, and brings on nausea and dyspepsia.

What eye specialist is there who has not heard from his patient: "Why, I had no idea in the world that it could be my eyes." There are many physicians, in fact, who look to the eyes for one of the first causes of stomach trouble.

It is perfectly amazing in reviewing the progress of science, surgery and medicine in the last fifty years, that the methods of correcting eye afflictions, even of the simplest kind, seem to have been entirely overlooked.

Science in physiology is correcting deformities which used to require harnesses or mechanical support. Surgery is correcting displacements which heretofore caused lifelong confinement. Physicians are departing more and more from the old-fashioned practice of continual drugging, and using more rational methods of restoring and preserving health.

But, until the recent discovery of this system of exercise to which I refer, no matter how simple your eye trouble was, you were told that you had to wear eye-glasses.

Now eye-glasses are not necessarily to be despised. They are a great invention in their way—so are crutches.

But you would not relish the anticipation that you had to use crutches all your life—nor would you. Just as soon as your sprained ankle, for instance, were in condition to stand it, your doctor would instruct you to touch it to the ground gradually and exercise it to bring back the *normal circulation* necessary to enable you to discard your crutch. Exactly the same with a broken arm—exercise it as soon as possible to bring it back to normal.

The wearing of eye-glasses is just exactly like using a crutch for life. Instead of growing stronger by their use, the eyes grow weaker, and you probably are well aware of the fact that in order to see perfectly the wearer of glasses must change them from time to time for new and stronger ones.

Let us see what authorities say on the subject of eye massage: Doctor De Schweinitz, of Philadelphia, Professor of Ophthalmology in Jefferson College, makes the statement that in treating so serious a condition as dreaded cataract of the eye, massage of the eye-ball "has been followed by improvement in vision and deepening of the anterior chamber." The Medical Record, in writing of the same serious ailment, urges the great value of "any means that would bring an increased blood supply" and considers that "the most feasible plan seems to be properly applied massage."

It would of course be impossible to satisfactorily or even safely give this massage (or exercise) with the hands, but this problem was successfully solved a few years ago by a New York specialist, who realized through experience how many troubles of the eyes could be quickly corrected by this method.

The greatest and most practical inventions usually seem the simplest and most obvious once they become known, and this one is no exception to that rule. So simple is it that any one can use it in their own home without instruction, yet it is so safe that there is not the slightest chance of giving the eyes anything but great benefit, no matter how long they may have been affected.

This system of exercise is fully explained, also many interesting scientific facts about the eyes are given in a little book on the subject, which will be sent without cost if you address Charles Tyrrell, M. D., 134 West 65th Street, New York, and mention having read this article in AINSLEE'S.

It may, with reason, be suggested that at no time could this system have been perfected more opportunely than now. At no time has the world demanded more perfect men and women; and if your eyes are weak, whether you wear glasses or not, it is not necessary for any one to point out its disadvantages—perhaps you even consider glasses a disfigurement to a certain degree—surely they are an inconvenience.

Of course you cannot put new muscles in an eye, as you would a new tire on an automobile, but you can restore health to these muscles and give them the same original strength that assures the thorough performance of their natural work.

Personally I have seen this system in a few months make a boy of eighteen entirely independent of glasses who had worn them continuously for twelve years; also enable old folks over sixty to discard their glasses in an incredibly short time. Therefore, I believe it is safe to assume that many thousands of spectacles will cease to be useful as this system becomes generally known, and I am sure that every one whose eyes are affected in any way, whether a wearer of glasses or not, will be greatly interested in the little book which tells so much about the eyes and their care.



You'll Never Forget

You who bake beans in home ovens, and find them hard to digest.

You who buy the wrong kind of ready-baked beans, and find them flat.

Some day you will try Van Camp's. You will find the beans nut-like, mellow and whole. You will find a sauce of superlative zest. And you will never forget.

*"The
National
Dish"*

Van Camp's
BAKED
WITH TOMATO
SAUCE
PORK AND BEANS

*"The
National
Dish"*

Nobody has ever baked beans like Van Camp's. Here a famous French chef has given this dish a matchless zest and flavor.

Here we pick out by hand just the white, plump beans.

Here we make a sauce which costs five times what common sauce is sold for. And we bake it with the beans.

And here we use modern steam ovens.

Here we bake in small parcels. Here we bake without crisping, without bursting a bean. And we bring to your table the fresh oven flavor.

Van Camp's, when once tasted, are never forgotten. They will bring you a new idea of baked beans.

One can will prove this. Get it today. Then leave the decision to the folks at your table. A 15-cent can serves five.

Three sizes: 10, 15 and 20 cents per can

(278)

Prepared by **Van Camp Packing Company, Indianapolis, Ind.**

Established 1861

WOMEN'S STORIES

The New Magazine for the Intelligent Woman of To-day

GO TO your news dealer as soon as you read this and ask him for a copy of *Women's Stories*. Probably you have never before this found a magazine that expressed at once your ideals, your thoughts and the kind of fiction you like best. We never had, and that is one reason why we started *Women's Stories*. You will find that it is *your* magazine, not a collection of special articles and opinionated editorials, with a little milk-and-water fiction, and much household lore and fashions.

Women's Stories is an all-fiction, illustrated magazine that goes to the heart of things, the conditions and situations that interest all women to-day. That does not mean that we are going to print a series of flabby, would-be romantic tales. Neither will you find sordid, unrelieved realism in *Women's Stories*. But if you will look over any number of the magazine so far, you will see just what we are aiming at.

In a word, we are trying to represent the wider world of women's interests in the form of fiction, and the names of the authors who write for *Women's Stories* are distinctly a guaranty of workmanship, power and truth in the telling. People like Alfred Noyes, Margarita Spalding Gerry, R. W. Child, Mary Cholmondeley, Herman Whitaker and Mary Roberts Rinehart wrote the first number, and the standard they set has not fallen off since then. A novelette in that number, by Jane Stone, is a good sample of the kind of thing *Women's Stories* stands for—clean-cut stories with ideas back of them—not preaching reform essays, but living fiction.

We wish we had room to tell you of the stories that are coming, but the names are enough to indicate the product—the romance, and the humor and the deeper problems that typically clever American writers are giving us. You will like the work of such writers as George Pattullo, Leroy Scott, Ida M. Evans, Elizabeth Newport Hepburn, Lloyd Osborne, Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, Anne O'Hagan, Helen Green Van Campen, Frances Aymar Mathews, Anna Katherine Green, Frederick Arnold Kummer, Alice MacGowan and Juliet Wilbor Tompkins.

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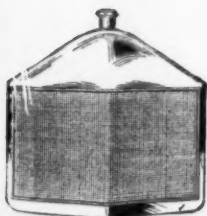
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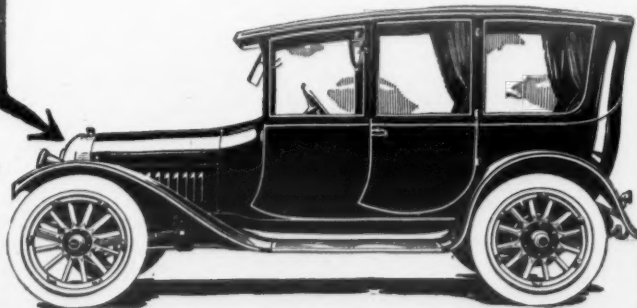
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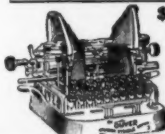
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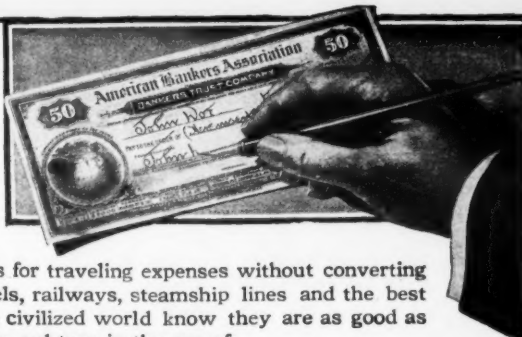
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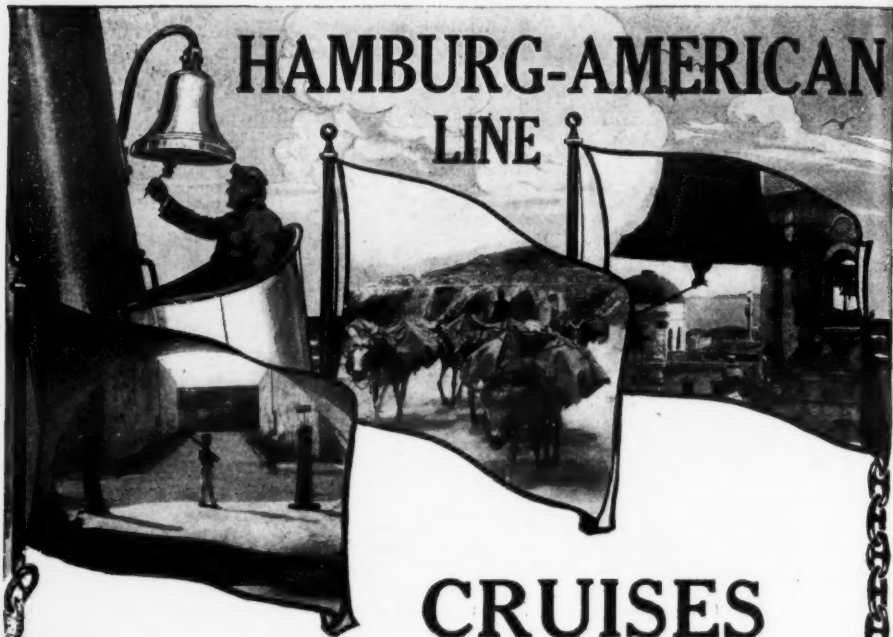
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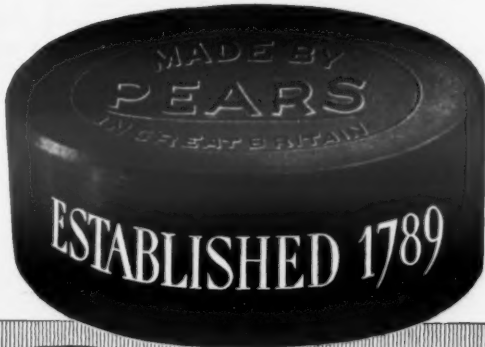
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